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**THE ESCAPE OF THE
NOTORIOUS SIR WILLIAM HEANS**

By the Same Author.

CAPTAIN QUADRING

By WILLIAM HAY
Some Press Opinions

Globe.—"He possesses a grandeur of style well suited to the portrayal of the strong elemental passions of which he writes."

Dundee Advertiser.—"Largely it is grim and terrifying, but its sombre drama is relieved by some exquisite tenderness and exalted human feeling. It is a novel far removed from the ordinary."

Country Life.—"This is an excellent novel. . . . The story is concerned with the fateful consequences of the reunion of two brothers whose earlier life together had led to mutual hatred and separation. Andrew Fairservice, the elder, a man of honour, but of narrow and implacable outlook, has, in revenge for a wrong done him by his brother, sold their home in Devon and migrated to Manalia, a penal settlement in Australia, where he had inherited a farm. He recruits his labour from the convicts in the station near. To this station in due time comes his younger brother, Henry Fairservice, as quartermaster, and inevitably there is trouble between them. . . . Mr. William Hay is a thoughtful writer; his book is well conceived and most admirably carried out."

Observer.—"The horror of Quadring's life, hated and forsaken, yet looked to in every emergency as the one thing more awful than his awful charges, is told with magnetic power."

Morning Post.—"Captain Quadring is a powerful book, quite out of the common, and written, especially in the tragic scenes, with a quaint simplicity of style which is peculiarly effective."

Daily Chronicle.—"Captain Quadring is an excellent piece of fiction."

Irish Times.—"Mr. William Hay has sprung into fame as a man who has made a successful corner in a part of human history almost untouched by writers of fiction. His new novel is concerned with the bitter feud between two brothers, reminding one in motif of "The Master of Ballantrae." But this story has a happier ending. The brothers are reconciled at the last, while one of them lies dying amid the tumult of a desperate assault made by rebellious convicts on the fortress of their keepers."

Literary World.—"It is a grim story, and Mr. Hay writes with such power we are left dumb with the reality of the scenes."

Adelaide Register.—"The book is highly recommended to those who can appreciate good work."

Adelaide Advertiser.—"As a study in psychology nothing could be more impressive."

Tasmanian Courier.—"Decidedly what is called a powerful novel."

British Australasian.—"You cannot read the book without laying your heart at Elizabeth's feet."

T. F. O'Connor's Weekly.—"The characterisation from first to last is excellent, and the figure of Meedstone, the quartermaster, stands out as though carved in the quarry stone itself."

HERRIDGE OF REALITY SWAMP

By WILLIAM HAY
Some Press Opinions

The Westminster Gazette.—"A book conceived in the grand manner—a book which, for all its sensational story, deals in souls rather than incidents; a book which towers above the petty fiction with which we are thronged, both in design and execution."

St. James's Gazette.—" . . . The suspense is splendidly felt, and the relief is dramatic."

The Lone Hand.—" . . . the only modern novel which this reviewer has read for some years which he found really stirring."

Manchester News.—" . . . This book is one which cannot but make a deep impression on its readers."

THE ESCAPE OF THE NOTORIOUS SIR WILLIAM HEANS

(And the mystery of Mr. Daunt)

A Romance of Tasmania

BY
WILLIAM HAY



LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN, LTD.,
RUSKIN HOUSE, MUSEUM STREET, W.C.

To
M.

*in Memory of our ascent of Mount Arthur,
Port Arthur,
and discovery in the undergrowth of
the iron arms of the Semaphore,
whose wooden flag-poles, when lifted from
the ground, fell back to earth in dusty fragments*

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esc.

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BOOK I

HIGH WATER



The Escape of Sir William Heans

CHAPTER I

TO PLAY THE GAME OUT

WHEN Sir William Heans first reached Hobarton, Tasmania, he was placed in the Government Architect's office on the strength of having erected additions to the family home in Ireland. Thus he spent a good deal of time designing penitentiaries, riding, reporting himself at the prison, "punting," and visiting among a few friends to whom he had brought letters. Indeed, when he first reached the island, on the strength of his family connections, he walked for a fine and chequered summer in quite exalted society. And it is of this prolific year—prolific of so much terror and good—that we have first to tell.

A great deal had occurred before he met his friend Mr. Jarvis Carnt, also a prisoner. Not that he would have looked down on Mr. Carnt, if he had met him then; he always had a fine eye for a male acquaintance; but he was living a somewhat protected life for a gentleman prisoner (or "long-coater") at that time, and being careful not to compromise his friends by frequenting the lower clubs, he had not come across Mr. Carnt.

It is strange how the world will give a man a second chance—especially if he be a good-looking one. This perennial instance of man's patience is no more evident in our male clubs and criminal courts than in the cabinets of the women. Sir William Heans' crime—his sin—which we shall touch on most briefly hereafter, and the committing of which had pushed him from the places that he loved into exile and boredom in a wild island at the bottom of the world—his sin seemed like to have been forgiven him by certain of his new acquaintances, one of whom, in particular, was a woman. This had not arisen from a rumour which had arrived with him—it is said, his own opinion somewhat too freely expressed—that he had been as much the sinned upon as the sinner, nor yet altogether from the far more potent argument of his good health and handsome face.

Captain Hyde-Shaxton and his wife, Matilda, had received him from the first with kindness, and even with warmth. The Captain, a man of forty-six, had some four years previous left a regiment and a young wife in India for a trip to Sydney, then in

its first fashionable prime¹; and afterwards, to his lasting glory, had voyaged thence to Hobarton, in the now famous *Beagle*, with Captain Fitzroy and Charles Darwin—whom he ever after elected to bring into his chuckling conversation as “young skins and bones.” Unlike Darwin, who could say even of Mount Wellington that it had “little picturesque beauty,” he fell in love with the island, and returned northward only to resign his commission and return with the young wife to Tasmania. Here, taking up land in the ranges near Flat Top Tier, the scenery and solitude had palled on both, and both had been glad when the restless husband had been given a small staff appointment in Hobarton, and moved into a secluded red brick house, facing down the bay over the shingles of the town.

The influence of an aspiring woman for good and peace is incalculable. (What men rare Queen Elizabeth made, giving them something they could not but revere!) Not only in her casual acquaintances did she inspire trust, but even (as a certain Mr. Daunt put it) in her husband, he, in his large way, entrusting her with the financing of both their large establishments—a matter she carried out with her fine financial head, with only the rarest and most hugely forgiven of blunders. This woman with the dreadful name and the Bedouin husband—a man always with his mind's eye over the next mountain—this by no means extraordinary woman, by achieving something every once in a while without a tinge of self in it, drew soon a circle of hard-eyed people about her, whose smiling faces, if they did not become more natural, went away as determined as they came. It seemed her desire to steal rather than to aid, teach, or pass judgment. Her sweet face seldom smiled. It was high, small, bright, and shyly serious. She seemed taller than she was; would have been active if she had not been delicate; and was straight as a needle. You would see her talking with someone in her drawing-room, near a chandelier, with that fine antagonistic eye of hers wild and full of a strained yearning.

Incidentally she was a beautiful woman—if not for exhibition purposes. She seemed to put it away from her as she talked, much as she would thrust back her hair—so golden. She admitted it, but it was not the fact apparently which she most wished to urge upon you. Even had it been it would have bothered but little the kind of women and men who sought her. They went there in homage—most of them—for some clever, invisible unselfishness in which they had caught her, and into which they could argue (clever as they were at scenting them) no slight to themselves or anyone else except herself and her private interests. The prisoner Carnt called her, in his wild, amusing way, “the carpet serpent.” We don't know whether

he was referring to her selfless subtleties or what. It seems the convict never forgave her for once distinctly bowing to him from a fly—when walking with Sir William Heans—though, with what he curiously described as the remnants of compunction, he had not bowed in return. Carnt, by the way, was not at all a bad fellow. He had been a steward or land-agent in England. He drank seldom, but when he drank heavily, it is said he became a devil of selfish treachery and calculation.

Heans, with his high black collarless stock, matchless claw-hammer, plaid breeks and hunting air, had received slight after slight on landing, and came at last, pale, proud, yet still on his dignity, to the Shaxtons' door. His health had really suffered on ship-board, and he had obtained a Government Pass to ride beyond the town bounds in four directions: the village of New Town, and five miles towards the ferry; Sandy Bay, but not more than two miles towards the Probation Station; and a gallop up the Storm Mountain track towards the Springs. On pain of the withdrawal of the pass, he was to call at no ale or dwellinghouse besides that known as "Muster-Master-Mason's Place" above the Cascades Prison: this being within sight of the courtyards.

As Captain Shaxton's house was a mile outside the Boundary he had, of necessity, applied for a fresh pass giving permission, for one day, to leave the Mountain Road and break his ride at Pitt's Villa. He had obtained this on producing a familiar letter of introduction from an aunt, showing he was distantly related to this family, with the proviso that he would be within boundary before dusk.

In the drawing-room, Daunt, of the foot police, was sitting with Mrs. Shaxton. He was a dark man, quick and neat, in a high-shouldered, kerseymere frock-coat, and duck breeches strapped over Wellingtons. He had slighted Heans (or Heans had fancied that he had) once already on the Hulk, and when the latter came in, having recovered himself, grey and quiet, he recognised him instantly, and entreated something of Mrs. Shaxton in a low voice near the mantel-piece. It sounded like "*mauvais sujet*." She rose, however, with her shy, staring, antagonistic look. It was hot and the drawing-room had been darkened: one of those dusky, dreamy interiors of the summer antipodes generally filled with dreamy women. Heans' face and head were in the line of the one raised blind, and he stood gravely before her, fine, pale, and wonderfully dignified. She withdrew her staring eyes in a strange way, and gave him her hand warmly. She was an earnest woman. Her welcome was unmistakably sweet, and kind; but she did not look at him again, searching about her, even while he bowed over her hand, for a chair on which he might sit. She introduced him to Daunt, who had risen. Daunt said darkly that they had met, but Heans, with some appearance of good-

humour, begged his pardon for a "devilish bad memory for faces."

"Ah," said Daunt, "I've a good one." And he made his little hearty, silent laugh. He was a very witty man in another way. It was he who had given vent to the clever saying: "He did not admire the gossiping ladies: their lips were too red."

Matilda said into her embroidery, that, "we heard about you, Sir William Heans, from the Gairdeners. Your Aunt wrote one of her wonderful letters."

"She said she would write," said Heans.

"She must be eighty-three. She wished to know what had become of Mr. Macaulay, the young orator. He was in Calcutta when I came out to my husband, and people were saying great things of him. I myself heard him say at a dinner-party, in a voice that rang with feeling, that he 'would not give one fallen pillar of Rome for all the marvellous Colonnades of Hindostan.'"

They all laughed at her way of saying it.

"Ah," said Heans, with some patience. "Macaulay has been her hero ever since the death of old Sir Walter. I protest, she would meet Scott wherever she went according to her own account, though, as she would say, 'he has lately written such dreadful things about us women!' 'The great poet,' she would say, 'was there with Lady Buccleugh: I knew him by his *déshabillé* and faithful eyes.'"

Matilda glanced at the speaker with her own strange orbs. A soft look lay at the root of their strained stare. She let her chin drop into her needle-hand, and looked into the distance.

"Ah," she said, in a soft voice, "it is a pleasure to answer Miss Gairdener's letters. Anything will interest her with a great or good wish in it. You can begin a despatch with Mr. Macaulay and end it with a receipt for plum chutney. She tells me she has been reading Pope's Homer, and that she finds Mr. Crabbe's poems so rousing. She begged us to look out for you, Sir William, and see that you took care of your health."

"Ah," put in Daunt, with decency, "the old lady will be glad then to hear safe news of you."

"She has a great heart, sir," said Sir William, in a fine even voice. He leant a little back in his chair, put a tortoise-shell eyeglass into his eye, and glared at Daunt through it.

Daunt laughed again hissing. "Great heart, great anxiety," he said, not so pleasantly. He turned in his neat, brisk way to Matilda. "When you write, don't make us out such bug-bears, Mrs. Shaxton. You are inclined to think us severe, but you would be surprised how politeness begets politeness, and contentment a return of tolerance and help, here in Hobarton."

Mrs. Shaxton frowned and shook her bent head.

"Contentment under suffering—yes, that is what you are always demanding," she said, into her embroidery, and rather

fiercely. "Mr. Daunt, you approach every one with a list of rules and a club—isn't that the weapon? Shouldn't suffering be approached with shame—shame and pity," (A sort of quiver in her breath stopped her.) "I have no experience, but it numbs them I think."

"Oh, the club's only to save one's head," said Daunt, with his hissing laugh. "The shame's there, but experience has taught us to take a stick in with it."

"You're always rappin' 'em," said Sir William, oh very fine and pale! "Isn't that what Mrs. Shaxton means?"

"I agree," said Daunt, with a sharp grin. "But what can you do with assurance? Where would you be with pity in one hand, and shame in the other, with a fellow that has none?"

"With the great—and Mr. Robinson,"¹ said Matilda, steadily.

"With the Chaplains, Mrs. Shaxton, and the uhleavened dough they leave for our baking. I'm an advocate, I fear, for less mauling and more discipline. The law or some local rule invariably stops you just as you have your hand upon some old offender. Egad, I'm anything but a convert of Paul Shaxton's! I cannot endure this silent-cell miasma."

Matilda turned towards Heans, dropping her work, her eyes at first on the window. "You must forgive us," she said, feelingly. "We have got into a too common Hobarton groove. With the best of intentions we cannot prevent our conversation from tottering back towards the improvement of the prisons. So many here are connected with, or interested in, them." (Heans felt suddenly easier.) "My husband has just invented a scheme for dealing with the desperado: silent confinement. To me it is hideous beyond words." (He found her steadily staring at him, her face glowing with excitement.) "He has made plans for a prison in which a man may live for weeks with open air exercise, and yet see no human face, and hear no sound, but that of a slippersd warder and clergyman for a few moments in the week." (Her voice quivered. She seemed entirely unaware, or to have forgotten in her intense interest in the subject, the barrier she was greeting between her husband and herself in Sir William's mind.) "Mr. Daunt," she added, "if you do not agree with Captain Shaxton, why do you not prevent him?"

"It's of no use," said Daunt, with his sharp laugh; "they are all wild about it. Government wants to experiment at Port Arthur.² The Commandants want to try it on the confirmed absconder. The doctors are ardent upon it for the malingering and the sham. Every warder's grabbing at it as a new handle for discipline—I declare it is marvellous clever the

¹ Pacificator of Blacks, and visitor at prisons.

² Second-sentence prison.

way Captain Shaxton gets the light and air into so many massive walls. I really believe Hobart Town has, at least, one architect to be proud of!"

Daunt's shrugging smile and averted eye seemed to emphasize that she was anything but proud of the others. Sir William Heans flushed a little. He was vain of his architectural re-birth, and with a slight tightening of his eyelids towards Daunt, took a masterly triumph.

"Surely it was Captain Shaxton's plan which I was asked to elevate this morning," he said, with an elegant quietude, "though possibly, being a prisoner, I was given only one half of the prison." (He lightly brushed his grey plaid trousers with his left hand which clasped, and on which remained, a mourning glove of lavender.) "The passages, all radiating apparently from a central hall, struck me as especially economical. One man might stand in the centre of the building and see any one of the iron signals move at those icy doors." He sat forward in his chair and slowly removed his eyeglass from his eye. A maid-servant had set some tea beside Matilda, and she was pouring it into the large green cups with a dazed grey face. As he lounged there, he glanced at her with a covert look of regret, seeing doubtless that he had troubled her by his plunge into tragedy, and wishing that he might unsay it for so kind a woman.

"Oh, you got that," said Daunt, deliberately. "I hope you are giving them sufficient light."

"Seven inches by three," said Sir William, with a steady glare at him, "crossed by two iron bars."

"Glass, I suppose?"

"Ribbed, opaque glass, half-an-inch thick."

"Egad!" ejaculated Daunt, with a shake; "glad I'm not responsible for it! 'Thank you,'" he said, as he took a cup of tea from Mrs. Shaxton, adding very gently, "Why, your hand's shaking, Mrs. Shaxton! This beastly subject's worrying you."

There was an uproar in the hall at that moment, and the drawing-room door opened with a clatter and a swish. A man with bushy little whiskers, a depressed moustache, and a jocular little voice, whirled into the room. He bundled heartily to the window and lugged the blind half-down, saying "Too much light for this climate." Then, with a laugh, he turned and approached the others. "Ah, Daunt," he bowed, "how are you?" Then to the other, "Sir William Heans, isn't it? I heard you were here. I've seen you in the street. We heard from your aunt. I'm glad to have the honour of making your acquaintance."

"Thank you—thank you," said Sir William, in his grey, grand way. The other, who never seemed to see anyone out of his curious little eyes, rolled nautically to a chair in his military uniform, dragged it nearer to the tea-table, and squatted on it.

"Everlasting smash," he said, seizing his tea-cup, "down at the cantonments. Billy Bannister" (he swallowed his tea and gave a

great bushy laugh) "brought a woman to a rout in the—oh, this'll be too strong for you, Matty! You fellows—presently! Bannister" (still laughing)—"the new cadet—has arrived with the idea that there's no Mrs. Grundy in this small starched town. You know the way they talk about the place at home. When old Neames gently remonstrated, young Sawyer replies: 'It wasn't a woman, sir, it was a female prisoner.'" He chuckled so much that a crumb stuck in his throat, and Daunt had to smack him on the back. Meanwhile he was holding out his cup for more, and Heans, who handed it to his wife, saw in the instant that his eye touched her face that she was flushed and cowed.

Daunt had resumed his seat and cup of tea. "Sir William Heans has been telling us, Shaxton," he said, "how he's been told to put your plans in order. He thinks them wonderfully clever."

Shaxton looked a little green. "You thought it good, Heans, did you?" (He nodded over his cup after a sharpish glance.) "Keep the expense in as much as possible. They're growling over all those cut edges. He!" (he began to chuckle again), "you'll have a booby old time with the round roof!"

"That was in the right rear court-yard," said Sir William calmly. "I have a scheme for that. I'm bothered if I know what to do for the middle lighting. What was the suggestion?"

"I'd put the old ship's skylight on it," said the other, all agog with his subject. "Why—the old three-decker skylight Governor Philip brought with him; had a flat roof where the skipper put his spy-glass—unless, indeed, we need a lantern."

He began to explain volubly his scheme to Heans.

Daunt drew his chair nearer to Matilda and began to talk to her in a rapid and courteous undertone. He seemed to have a great deal to say. Heans seemed ill-at-ease under the discussion of the prison, and looked once or twice towards his hostess as though, though interested, he could not forget her distaste for it. Shaxton seemed conscious of his stiffening manner, and was trying to pierce it with good-natured jesting. Perhaps Daunt's cold movement towards his wife had brought, for the first time, to his comprehension the peculiarity of the situation for the prisoner. His manner grew warmer.

"Why, Matilda," he cried, laughing, "hang it, you've been pitching into Sir William Heans about my prison! He's frightened to say a thing. I can't get a word out of him."

She gave a little, blind look at Heans.

"You know how agitating it is to me," she said, in a low voice. She seemed to stoop, and her hand fingered among the tea-cups. "Could you not take Sir William Heans to the study?"

"Why yes, come," Daunt cried, springing up with chivalric impatience. "The ladies don't want the thing in their very drawing-rooms!"

"Indeed, I must be taking my departure," said Heans. He

gave a grey look under the blind where the fire of the day was dying stubbornly among the leaves. The three others knew instantly from his tone what was in his mind.

"Nonsense!" cried Hyde-Shaxton. "Daunt will manage that for us. What's it? Must be past the Boundary before five, Mr. Daunt?"

Daunt left a black silence for a full minute. "No, I'll see him past Boundary," he said, with a look of steady, careful courtesy towards Heans.

"Come, Daunt," cried Shaxton, "you'll get him a pass to break his rides at Pitt's Villa?"

Daunt gave a sharp, good-natured laugh, saying: "We'll see—we'll see." Then he added, "Now, Captain Shaxton, what is this that you wish to do with Sir William Heans?"

The Captain was chuckling. Heans' grave dignity was perfect. "Ah," cries the former, "Daunt's one of these dangerous men! I'll have to have you for my turnkey, Daunt—ha! ha! Why, Matty—have you told Sir William about our chapel? I protest, if ever my plans are used, we'll get a dispensation and put you in the wooden pulpit!"

"Does Mrs. Shaxton, then, think even the malingerer a subject for sentiment?" asked Sir William, with a lame lightness. "I declare I'd throw up the work if——"

"Oh, please, no," cried Mrs. Shaxton, with a flashing look at Daunt. "Don't do that, Sir William Heans." She gave him her staring glance in which was something of a proud beseechment.

"Ah," said Daunt, "we won't require that of you!"

"Ho-ho! it's the 'poor' malingerer, the 'poor' absconder, to Matty!" chuckled Shaxton, not without signs of pride in his remarkable possession. "She's so soft-hearted, everything's sentiment to Matilda. Don't let her proselytise on you, Heaps. She's a dangerous woman. She'll have you buildin' St. Marys and St. Judes all over Tasmania—ho-ho! It was Matty prevailed upon me to put in the chapel. I had to go and invent stalls for it so that the poor fellows couldn't see anyone but the parson. Did they give that to you?"

"Half of it—wasn't it?" said Daunt.

"I have the chapel," said Sir William. "It will be rather an unpleasing place."

"Well, that's an outcome of Mrs. Shaxton's sentiment," cried Shaxton. "There was another one when she had old Thomas Thou to experiment on the grog—I mean the garden. You can't shake her faith. It's all sentiment to Matilda—sentiment and self-discipline. She won't have you disciplining anyone else."

He gave a great bushy laugh, and whisked out of the room, beckoning the men after him. They went out. His chuckling voice was heard subsiding down the hall. "That reminds me,

I've got a laugh for you fellows over old Clisby, the corn contractor. It seems that old Miss Milly Shadwell, the old maid" (even this appeared to be a fact of some amusement), "wouldn't marry him because she said he looked too goody-goody. Ho-ho ho!"

CHAPTER II

HIGH AND DRY

HEANS and Shaxton became rather thick on architecture during this and the next month. The "Silent Prison" was still a castle-in-the-air, however; though two sites—one near the Cascades Women's Prison and another on the opposite side of the Derwent at Kangaroo Point—had been discussed and gone over. Suddenly the whole matter had been shelved—and art and Sir William with it into obscurity—for one more important in the eyes of the officers, the gallant explorer Governor, Hobartton society, and even of Hyde-Shaxton himself: the arrival of the bombships *Erebus* and *Terror* in the Derwent, under the intrepid captains James Ross and Crozier, to refit for a hair-raising thrust into the ice of the pole. The Captain and his wife had been summoned by Sir John Franklin to an explorers' dinner at Government House, and all the winter months the former was on and off the *Erebus*, or chuckling among the prisons and waterfalls with her officers.

The Captain would come home and chuckle over the day with his wife—and Daunt and Sir William Heans, who were sometimes with her—over Sir John Franklin's "family prayers" before the quail-shoot, or "old-lady" sermons to the prisoners. "How those men listen to him without exploding," he would say, "I don't know! I give you my word, I can't! Yesterday he was up with the women in the Cascades. There they were ranged up in one of the yards in their aprons and white bonnets, lounging and smirking and bobbing at the sailor-boys as gay as paroquets. Says he, taking off his hat to them and stepping forward in his uniform, with his funny old black tragedy eyes blazing with good intentions, 'Now, women,' says he, 'any little goodness or kindness will do for your Governor. Just take that to heart. God Almighty's looking down on you in His mercy. He sees your troubles. Take a reef in, there's good girls; and see and shape a kinder course.' All the while there was young Willie Bannister nudging my arm, and asking who the woman was in the black shawl, with the brown hair: 'A stunning girl, Shaxton,' says he. *Entre nous*, Daunt," cries the Captain, turning on that officer, who, with Sir William Heans, was calling that afternoon on Mrs. Shaxton, "who is the convict in black?

Everybody's asking about her. If she's a common prisoner, why don't they clothe her like the others?"

"That would be the woman known as 'Madame Ruth'," pondered Daunt; "a long, thin, lofty face, had she?"

"You couldn't see her-eyes," said Shaxton; "she held them down, much to Bannister's annoyance. She stood with another woman at the back near a wall, a bit apart from the line, with a black shawl on her hair. A regular Juno! I heard old Franklin ask Leete, the Governor, about her. Leete starts nodding in his short, angry way . . . such stunning, beautiful hair! My heaven, what hair!"

"That was who it was," said Daunt, as one speaks who is about to thrust aside the subject. "You must ask Leete about her. She's of good birth, or pretends to be. I suppress the details."

"Go along with you!" laughed Shaxton. "I knew you wouldn't be open . . . I'd like to hear that woman's story—if only for Franklin's stare of amazement."

"He is not made for this work," said Daunt, whose subsequent quarrel with Sir John is history. "Whensever he is brought into touch with the prisoners—which is as little as convenient—he asks for plain dealing and bother the elaborations of experience. He thinks he can ye-ho-heave-ho at them as if they are unruly sailors. After he's gone, they're off their balance and quite unmanageable."

"Mr. Daunt," said Matilda, who looked soft pink and white to-day, and whose eyes blazed almost eerily, "I don't think you understand Sir John Franklin, any more than he does your convicts. He is always trying to put heart into them, when they are all too full of spirit already. And you are always expecting him to understand that these men he condemns you for condemning are untiring and would wear down an angel. Surely it is better to have somebody like this here for a few years. It is giving you a lot of trouble, but it is making us all better. You say yourself they're all—oh so tired of cold, level-headed punishment." (She shook her serious head with a frown and a shiver.)

"Come, Mrs. Shaxton," said Daunt, grimly, "what would you do with a prisoner with the energy and temper of a fiend, who won't control either of them—turn Sir John on him with that passionate note of his and a little scripture?"

The three men laughed. Matilda, though daunted, glared on in her blazing way through the French-windows.

"Give him a week's 'solitary' and silence," cried Hyde-Shaxton, "and let him try his energy and temper on our three-foot walls. Eh, Heans—they'll come crawling to me for my snuff-box yet? Some man'll drive 'em mad with his talking and 'For Heaven's sake, Shaxton,' they'll say, 'put it up and give us some peace.'"

"Yes?" said Sir William, leaning on his knees, and swinging

the ribbon of his glass with veiled eyes. (He looked very pale, gentle, and handsome that day.) "And what shall it be called—a motto for your lintel, Captain Shaxton: *Dulce Domum—Hotel Dieu—Væ Victis?*"

He gave a quiet look at Matilda Shaxton, and her eyes dropped.

The Captain put up his hand for peace, and with his head down, racked his brains. "*Ut prosim,*"¹ he presently hauled forth, with a somewhat laboured solemnity.

"*Lex talionis,*"² hissed Daunt, in his dark way.

Mrs. Shaxton had risen with a jerk and taken her *Souvenir* from the what-not behind her chair.

"I have my motto too," she said. "Paul knows it well enough." Before her husband could speak, she read out, as she stood, with her sweet face pale and half-turned from the window: "*Homo sum, et nihil humani a me alienum puto.*"³

¹ "That I may do good."

² "The law of retaliation."

³ "I am a man, and count nothing human alien to me."

CHAPTER III

THE BRAVE FELLOWS

FOR the first two months of his acquaintance with the Shaxtons, Heans had seen very little of Matilda. Once and again he had taken tea with her—when the weekly meeting in the study had finished late—but more than once he had himself been responsible for a curtailment of the discussion between himself, Shaxton, and two or three “silent-treatment” enthusiasts, that he might, as he said, “get the alterations worked in that evening.”

He had not much to which to return.

At that time he was allowed a phantom salary from “the Crown,” and rented a “registered lodging,” under the shingles, from an old prisoner-landlady in a two-storied brick tenement in —— Street. Several causes (one of which we shall soon learn) had reduced him to this room. It was a long, low attic, but quite sumptuous in its way.

Dotted about a ripped and faded amber carpet were some little chairs of sun-blistered marquetry, roughly mended with pine, and against the walls, quite a sumptuousity of stowed-away, old-time furniture— heavy, fan-backed arm-chairs, bursten and threadbare, their legs straight and uncompromising; Grecian sofas, black, with faded terra-cotta cushions, such as we see in David’s portraits, and since become so universal an object in our Colonial huts and homesteads; also dolphin-armed and even gilt chairs, and others yet with corkscrew legs and remnants of tasselled cushions. There they were along the walls: little but the patched wood left of their travelled pride: the seats of some of them mere webs or nests of cloth, whose ends hung to the floor in curious and amazing festoons. His landlady, Mrs. Quaid, after a week of sordid, sulky exteriors, had solemnly apologised for the torn cushions and rickety legs, but Sir William had politely admired the wood-work.

Against the left-hand wall was a tall, red rosewood bookcase, with bars instead of glass, inhabited by a drunken row of casuals in one shelf:—a tattered novel called *Lochandru*, a tome entitled *Literary Gems*, described as “from grave to gay, from lively to severe,” *The Wolf of Badenoch*, some odd remnants of Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*, a stray from *The Hobart Town Magazine*, and six green-marbled volumes of Langhorne’s *Plutarch*, the last named having been purchased in Mrs. Quaid’s past from “a dis-

tressed soldier—a bad un'—who'd never read them"; the others during Sir William's tenure for some dark reason connected with "cultured manners," and carried up with some kindling wood (like so many cabbages or roses) for the "cheerfuller appearance" of the prison. At the moment, Sir William had omitted to examine the titles, but had passed the "Ancients" through his fingers, remarking how pleasantly their key-patterned backs reminded him of his schooldays.

On the other side of the room, near the chimney, was a row of brown samplers in frames, to the verses of which Sir William gave, through his eyeglass, some pondering contemplation. We may suppose that he gained, like the cynical ladies who worked them in with their cotton, some consolation from that dry passage from Aurelius :—

Thou seest how few the things are the which if a man lays
hold of, he is able to live a life which flows in quiet.

Of a tonic sadness from this little poem :—

SIC PASSIM.

The world's a stage ; and players know full well
That they must part, when rings the caller's bell.
Yea, they must part and mourn their faithful loves ;
The cote is silent ; sundered all the doves !

To the right of the samplers, in the dark corner, was a large, dim painting in a gilt frame, with indistinct boats and a muddy blue sky punctured by three holes, such as might have been made by a musket bullet. The landlady, with a sort of mourning air, for something which was peculiar, and couldn't help it, said she had been told by a certain Mr. Six, a prisoner, and "a gentleman with learning," that it had been painted by "a mad artist," with a "kind of gambler's name" like "*Toten*." There was yet another picture to the left of the chimney, hardly decipherable under a covering of soot and age. An ash-coloured sea spread back to a gleam of cliffs. A little to the right, a jumble of old vessels fought in mist and smoke. Yet further to the right, gummed, as it were, upon the sea, as from a child's transfer-paper, stood line upon line of stiff regiments of soldiers—mitres and cornered hats spreading back to giant pennants and heads of barred steel. It was not very well done. The artist's name had been obliterated ; nor was there any title to the old piece ; but Sir William, in a homesick moment, had christened it "England—and the English !"

It was Sir William's habit to sit at the fire in a low, walnut-wood chair, having a seat of vari-coloured patterns, while he took his meals off a tiny gilt-legged table, propped for security in the corner of the whitewashed chimney. It was here that he,

subsequently, made his study of the jailed volumes, having, in a jaundiced mood, freed one of the Plutarchs of its bars, and been spurred to further reading by this highly interesting discursion: "Speaking of the power of women, he said, 'All men naturally govern the women, we govern all men, and our wives govern us.' But this might be taken from the Apophthegms of Themistocles. For his son directing in most things through his mother, he said, 'The Athenians govern the Greeks, I govern the Athenians, you, wife, govern me, and your son governs you; let him then use that power with moderation, which, child as he is, sets him above all the Greeks.'"

What more he found in these remarkable volumes we have presently to tell.

For writing or drawing out his plans, Heans used the desk of a little travelling *escritoire*, yellow, brass-handled, and covered with voyage-marks. Near this, for the convenience of writing, he had drawn up a great armless, 'cello-backed chair, having in its back a carved Greek vase, and from which the green brocade had rotted and the gimp hung in shreds.

His landlady, a little, old, pinched woman with long grey ringlets and large, passionate black eyes, gradually changed the expression of tragic hostility, with which she had received him into her house, to one of tragic anxiety. She would watch him go from her door, up the street, with her seamed hand on the post. (She was very fond of opening doors and looking out.) Thence she would ascend to his room, and desultorily dust. Afterwards she would go down to her kitchen and cook for him. To Heans, she was a funny, passionate, asperse, tragic, kindly, uncordial, evasive, cheerful, smiling, grim old woman; and if he had been asked, he would doubtless have said that he had "conceived quite an attachment for her."

The first floor was rented by a Mr. Boxley, grocer, retired, who paled when he met "the notorious Sir William Heans" in the passage. The front ground room was haunted by a young man named Pelican, with whom, for some reason mysterious to his landlady, Sir William was at pains to perpetuate a precarious bowing acquaintance.

On his arrival at Pitt's Villa, by appointment, one afternoon at the end of January, Heans was told of the Captain's wild departure an hour previous, and taken by a distressed Matilda to the hanging garden, from which she was shown the bomb-ships *Erebus* and *Terror*, motionless upon the mountain sea, their pennons flying in honour of Governor Franklin.

They stood listening to the "o-o-m" of distant guns, and talking—Matilda a trace hectically—of the grim men who were to force those blunt-bowed ships, past roaring beaches, into the unhumaned ice. "How inspiring," she cried, pointing down among the cots and buildings of the slopes, "to all these humdrum people, steadily living and dying, that a man should

attempt this—this outrageous thing in his life!" Sir William, in his beautiful shepherd's-plaid trousers, towering stock, and short nankeen riding-coat—Sir William, sad of face to day for something that he had missed—agreed, and spoke of "the seasoned look of the hulls—brown like a good cheroot and of the flat bow like a scutcheon." The leading vessel would be the *Erebus*—James Ross's ship. How would Sir John let them go out without him!

"How fast they fold the sails against the varnished yards!" said Matilda breathlessly. "It is just as if they vanish!"

"Line of battle style," said Sir William. He struggled up his eyeglass and put it into a grey, excited eye. "Good God, Mrs. Shaxton," he said, "do you think they'd give a fellow a berth in them?"

He was staring out in his fine way, and if his grey face chimed with his tragic question, he did not move, even when Matilda turned to him her fearful and shy face.

"You have been suffering, Sir William Heans," she said, breathless, yet eager. "I am afraid you are finding—finding the life difficult." Sir William did not answer for a moment. He dropped his head and tapped his cane upon the wooden rail.

"These men are voracious against misfortune—against a sentence—in one of my standing," he said, in a quiet voice. He went on to tell how Head-warder Rowkes or Captain Jones, who have raised themselves, and from whom temper and selfishness have barred the goal of their ambition, oppressed him with a secret and careful resentment. In the strangest way did the most successful, commanding-looking men disclose some private disappointment by a severity or a grim snub which they knew he was powerless to return. "The resentment of the prisoners in the Hulk, when I go to report myself, against my clothes" (he looked upon his gauds with a sighing laugh) "is kinder than the hate of these deluded men."

Sir William stopped, drew himself up, and tapped his expanding chest with his riding-cane. He had surprised himself in an honest moment, and—like most of us when we let ourselves fall for a moment into the honest—growing tragic and selfish. He simpered a little as he withdrew his eyeglass. "Don't let my cause interfere, Mrs. Shaxton," he said, "with these inspiring vessels. I am one of your humdrum people now. I must be content to grow excited from the shore. I must try, Mrs. Shaxton" (removing his grey top-hat to her with a hoarse if merry laugh), "to imitate your wonderful feminine enthusiasm for other people's honour."

"This is national honour," she said in her strained voice, but when she stopped quickly with her eyes on the ships, her lips twisted with sympathy and bitterness still unspoken. She trembled suddenly and spoke. "I am so sorry, Sir William Heans, to hear of your terrible difficulties, but so very glad and

so proud that you have spoken openly to me about them. I knew—from what my husband has told me—and—and from what I know of the world—that presently wicked men would make you feel your position. But we were hoping that you would find in our house, and in the faces of some of our friends at least, a refuge of private acquaintance. Will you come up oftener, sir? This will always be a friendly garden. If I am down in town, will you not come down to this seat and take tea—but I am here nearly always, and—and—I want you to think—always steadfast for you and for your good.”

Heans had kept his hat in his hand. His handsome face, with its full hair and French moustaches, was flushed, stern, and moved. He had dropped his grey head a little.

“I spoke foolishly, Mrs. Shaxton,” he said, jerking out the words with nervousness and difficulty. “It was the English fog in those old sails creeping about a fellow’s heart. I knew John Ross’s second officer. He may be there with his ardent face—in one of those ships. I can’t comprehend readily that I have no share in all the bravery and heartiness of their coming in—that I’m—pardon—pardon” (he tried to simper again and put his eyeglass heavily up). “How Englishly the flowers grow in your garden, here, Mrs. Shaxton—those hollyhocks with their stakes.”

She looked about and nodded wildly. Her grey cashmere shawl had fallen down her heavy sleeves till it reached her hands. Sir William gazed at her. A libertine onlooker might have asked: “What did this earnestness with so much beauty! What did this flower with a stern and feeling soul!” The soft white of her dress brought out her faint colour and bright gold hair. But that struggling earnestness, with its hint of a strain, that serious concern, peered striving through her star-like face like the head of some angelic soldier.

Above them the sun was dipping behind Old Storm Hill, and below the shadows of late afternoon were creeping over the ships towards the opposite mountains. It was dark down the great channel, and sea-horses were leaping in on a rising wind. Mrs. Shaxton’s hair fluttered and she put her hand upon it. One end of her shawl flew out and hit Heans on the mouth, and he caught it in a flurry and gave it to her quietly. They both stood looking at the approaching storm, and the thoughts of each fled slowly to the same thing: the coming winter.

Matilda looked pale and frightened.

“You will find the winter hard, Sir William Heans,” she said, hurriedly. “You must come up often—often—and never forget how anxious we all are about you. It is such a—such a stern place. I am so frightened of your being worn down—as some have been.” (She turned to him, staring earnestly at him.) “You will want to be so careful—especially as you are not very happy. Perhaps some of them are wicked, and will watch for discontent. It is unbelievable, but I have been told how some

have played upon it, when they were jealous of a prisoner; and one false step and they all must harden. I am afraid you are one who will create jealousy. I am afraid of your pride, sir, and that you will bring some annoyance upon yourself. You will need all your tact, and all your good temper, and patience—do, sir, try and be patient. I know—it is the disappointed man you will have to fear—no gentleman will harm you. But some are highly placed and very powerful. Indeed, if they once begin to hate, their good impulses seem to go.”

“Steady for a year, they say,” said Heans, smiling a little through his eyeglass. “Then a fellow has a chance. ‘Pon my word, you’re goodness itself, Mrs. Shaxton! I’ll come up as often as you will allow me.”

“We feel very responsible for you,” said Matilda, “after Miss Gairdener’s letter.” And she turned and led the way across the terrace into the drawing-room. “The storm is coming,” she said, looking back out of the window; “will you get down in time?”

“What a good thing the ships are in!” said Heans, with a glance down the black harbour.

* * * * *

“Be very careful, Sir William Heans,” she repeated, as she said good-bye. “I have heard my husband speaking.” She seemed almost frightened to let him go.

He kissed her hand. The rain pattered on the shingle roof.

CHAPTER IV

SIR WILLIAM IS LATE

MATILDA had seen a great deal of Sir William Heans during February. Several times among his many calls he found her alone, and then, suddenly, with no word of explanation, their genial tête-à-têtes had ended, and she seemed to become absorbed with Captain Shaxton in the hospitalities to the explorers, and such engagements. Heans, calling now and then, was compelled to take tea alone upon the terrace in the increasing cold.

Whether Sir William was aware of some cause for this is not clear, but his face in these days grew somewhat blue and thin, while a certain dark-eyed, scowling servant-maid—a convict—seemed to think his somewhat bowed attitude anything but calling for sympathy, eyeing his back with a dark hate as she brought him his tea.

Sir William thanked the woman with politeness.

One evening, on a lonely visit in April, Mrs. Shaxton hurried down from the drawing-room, and greeting him palely, said how sorry she had been to miss so many of his visits. She did not look at him intently, and Sir William hardly seemed to see her. She spoke excitedly, as if she were abstracted with her hurry or possibly at the aspect of his figure alone upon the seat. He was very proud, and spoke of the happiness of being made free of her garden, and the beauty of the ride up.

Now it was palpable that he had lost some indefinable something since she had last seen him. His face was thinner and paler, and, worst sign of all, his eyes, rather hollow, had a curious white glare of excitement, strain, or desperation in them. The woman must have noticed that he was in some way beshadowed and different—some way fallen in his pride—for, her face breaking suddenly into an almost foolish panic, she asked him if "all was well—and if his health was good."

He said "All goes well enough, Mrs. Shaxton," in a rapid tone, but stood as if he had not told all. She did not seem to know how to express her anxiety. Her hand was on the seat-back, and she moved her fingers to and fro a little, as hardly knowing what she did. She asked suddenly, in an earnest voice: "Oh, I hope some refreshment was brought out instantly; I shall—I shall hope to be at home more."

"Indeed — I hope I do not inconvenience the woman," Heans brought to her rescue. "I feel that I am something of a nuisance——"

"My maid tells me you have been later coming—half-past four instead of three—I think. They were taken by surprise. It may have made them seem slow in attending upon you!"

Heans interrupted with a singular thickness of speech.

"I have been later getting here only on the last three occasions," he said, with a sort of abruptness, and the blood died slowly out of his face until he was deadly white. He suddenly put round his hand and caught the seat-back, sitting into it with a jerk. His grey top-hat hung loosely from his lavender fingers, and he looked about him in a wild way like a man clutching at a point.

"I am sorry," he said. "I feel a faintness for some reason."

She remained where she was, but slid her hand a little nearer along the seat-back, her shawl trailing and trembling, her face in its heavy bonnet as white as that near her hand. She said at last, with fright in her voice: "Sir William Heans, what have you been doing?"

He raised his drawn face, and stared grimly into her eyes along that they had time to soften with tears.

"Why, what would I do?" he said, breathlessly.

She was standing there behind him, leaning away a little—he staring up white and sharp—when a man's voice rang metallically from the top of the terrace: "Ah, there she is!" Both glared up towards it, and then smiled. Grey Heans rose up with a heavy ceremonious air.

Daunt, of the Police, immaculate in his grey coat and Wellingtons, had just emerged from the drawing-room, followed by two officers, one in naval uniform. They made at once for the side-steps leading to the lower terrace, and came bowing down. The sailors were brown-whiskered men in little naval caps, great stocks enwrapping choking collars, voluminous holland bags, tight single-breasted waistcoats and high-waisted ill-fitting frock-coats, very high of collar and very tight of sleeve. Daunt, very yellow in the face, ushered them energetically along. There was a wild look beneath his heartiness.

Matilda went across, met, and welcomed them. She seemed to know them, and bowed a little over some little complimentary jest. When she turned for Sir William, he came forward in his fine way, and was made known by name to the sailors, who were somewhat awed out of their jollity by his reserve and pale, grave air.

Mrs. Shaxton took a seat by a rustic table, and Daunt, with a long peculiar stare and stern nod at Heans (a form of greeting which seemed to surprise the officers), drew a chair near Matilda's, and began a string of rapid sentences. Heans was

left talking with the sailors. This he did, swinging on his legs, and tending gradually to the light and witty. His eyeglass was up, and soon the three of them were grinning. Down in the vast valley the ships were drying sails, but he never once looked towards these or mentioned them.

"We met Captain Shaxton on the wharf," said Daunt, with a sudden distinctness; "and I asked if we should find you at home. He said you would be leaving the Hall about five. You would be busy dressing, he thought, but Boyd and Cooke were both eager to see the view, and thought they might get you to keep them a dance! You know what sailors are!"

(How often does it happen in life that we have a Daunt fellow-secret-holder with us!)

In a moment Heans was out of it, and the sailors were "hanging" the view, madame," and protesting round his shoulders that they had made the ride solely for the honour of an engagement.

"Sir William Heans has forestalled us," cried Boyd, with an outcry of pleasant laughter. "How many do you entreat, sir, for the gallantry of the assault?"

Sir William laughed steadily. Before he could speak, even if he had found anything to say, Matilda said rather wildly, "Sir William Heans does not dance." Then, shaking her ringlets over a sudden laugh, she asked Cooke if he thought the ride worthily recompensed with two.

Both officers, wreathed in smiles, took off their tiny naval caps and made their gallant bows. Daunt, turning a little with them, bemoaned in a sort of rueful monotone that he must take his chance, as there was a late meeting at the Colonial Surgeon's.

"Mrs. Shaxton," began Sir William Heans, laughingly (and both Matilda and Daunt looked slowly up at him), "has not even told me the name of the ball! Is it for to-night you are in such good fortune?"

"Hallo, sir!" cried Lieutenant Boyd, staring round. "It's His Excellency's birthday, sir! You must be a hermit!"

"Ah," said Daunt, hissing suddenly in, "Sir William Heans is too much of a student: chained to his books—isn't that it?" But the ladies haven't chosen a convenient night for anybody but you idle sailors. Mrs. Shaxton, you should hear Montague and Leete on the subject. I heard Montague say, shrugging his Norman shoulders, 'When Neptune's here, what woman considers poor Vulcan!'"

"Why Vulcan?" cried Boyd.

"Leete's Governor of the Cascades, and Montague is our eminent Colonial Secretary."

"Forgers of chains," said Matilda, "we may not consider you!"

"Fair too," said Sir William. "Who should lionize poor

storm-beaten Neptune if not the ladies! In a little while it's 'Come aboard, sir,' and gone all the beauty and gentleness of home life but a daguerreotype swinging on a hook—and yet," looking for the first time at the ships, "which of us but is not deeply envious?"

"Oh, we're snug enough when the wind's favourable," said Boyd, chuckling. "But you should come, sir." Magruder (with a cock of his eye at Heans)—"old Magruder tells us all the supremest *ton* of Hobarton are gathering to do it honour."

All the rest laughed politely, including Sir William.

"Should not even my grey hairs omit me?" said the latter. "I honour you fellows by envying you—rancorous envy, I can assure you!" He ended with a little brief, defensive bow.

"Sir William Heans has fallen in love with your ships," said Matilda. "I remember his saying on the night you came in, 'They have the fog of Old England in their sails.' We were thinking how wonderful you were, and how you broadened life for all us humdrum people. Here we sit on these slopes with our fixed joys and troubles, and in you sail with your stern little ships, and lo, all is sublime and hazardous!"

Sir William did not move, but Daunt raised his eyes upon her slowly. The flushed officers were laughing with her, and beneath their deprecating badinage, Daunt's gaze passed from her to Heans. The latter was now looking towards the ships, but one hand which he had placed upon the seat-back was trembling. The police-officer's mouth seemed as if it were laughing with the rest, but no sound came from it.

"Ah," he presently threw in, "you lucky gentlemen with your grand adventures! May I mention it—I got a bang from an ankle chain this morning." (He touched his knee carefully). "The anklet was intended, but through a native sharpness I received the chain."

"Mutineer or escapee?" asked Cooke.

"The savage-seditionary with a brain he fancies quicker than yours! Nothing will do for him but proof. I am nothing if not a 'frustrator of hopes,' Mrs. Shaxton. For Heaven's sake find us something sublime in our humdrum bruises!"

"I have praise even for the stern frustrator of hopes," said Matilda. "But some one has written or said: 'The sailor into the unknown sea hurts no one with his heroism.'"

Heans alone did not turn his head.

"You stopped him?" cried the sailors again.

"Stopped him? Yes, I stopped him," echoed Daunt, "there are many ways. See," he said, springing upright in his chair, "I have a little invention of my own here, which, domestic article as it is, I have known stop an assaulting prisoner."

Leaning forward, he produced a flint-steel: a little thing shaped like a horseshoe, which (he explained) you could conceal in your

hand, or fix on your thumb or forefinger. At once, having closed his left fist, he fixed it as if it had been a ring on his third finger, and held both up that, they might see how the "striker," not blunt, as was usual, had been filed to a razor's edge.

"That is one way," he said. "Here is another. Permit me to take your hand a moment, Sir William Heans."

He rose and came forward, and, as Sir William, whose back was half turned to him, lifted his right hand, as much in instinctive amazement as consent, from the seat-back, took it powerfully in both of his and twisted the side of the palm up and over till, as the wrist resisted with a twinge, the hand and arm doubled in against the baronet's back, forcing him to bend a little over the seat in front of him. Sir William, pale with surprise amid the laughter (Matilda was laughing), tried to straighten himself, but met by a stubborn twinge, stooped again. In the instant Dunt had dropped his hand.

"An old grapple," said Daunt. "Now, sir," he said, putting out his hand and turning his back on Heans, so palely smiling, "try it on me."

Heans made just the breath of a movement towards him, then laughed and shook his head. A trifle haughtily he said something about being "too old for horse-play." Boyd said, "I will," and pushed forward, half-laughing, with the intention of seizing Daunt's hand, when the latter suddenly subsided into his chair, saying, "No, I know you sailors." Boyd drew back from his dark, immaculate face a trifle crestfallen. He saw amazedly that it was stern.

"Ah, an experienced man!" he burst out, lamely. "You shouldn't have let him do it, Sir William Heans. By Heaven, he's a slippery gentleman!"

"Quite an entertainment!" said Sir William lightly, clutching the seat; "I am the misguided victim who lends his watch, with which the fellow does his tricks!" (He lifted his lavender glove and shook it laughingly). "My hand has come back to me not much the worse. Ha-ha, I leave my revenge with you, Lieutenant Boyd! Mrs. Shaxton, I hear the mare whinnying. Forgive me, I must get away. Gentlemen, your most humble, obedient servant."

He advanced quickly towards Matilda, but she, as she rose to meet him, said, "Oh, I will come up to the house with you, Sir William Heans." She made her excuses, quick and greyly, and led the way to the steps. Heans simpered his grey chimney-pot at this one and that. The officers waved their preposterous little caps. Daunt, who had risen, bent his brisk back with a kind of tragic courtesy. Slowly up the steps went Matilda and Sir William, saying little, pale and tense.

"Can't we make him change his mind," said Boyd. "It's such a pity, a jolly fellow like that. I'll hail him again, Daunt. If he's so set on the old ships, he must come on board."

"You would hardly think it," said Daunt, bluntly, "but that poor fellow is a prisoner."

"A prisoner!" They edged nearer to Daunt, tugging their whiskers, very pale and aghast.

"Heavens, man!" cried Boyd. "Why did you do that beastly business with him?"

Daunt was looking after them, ill now and yellow.

"A kindly feeling—well——" (He hesitated in a half-bitter manner). "Don't ask me! This place seems to have a curse of looseness for men in his position."

The two officers watched the two figures—now smiling a little—pass in through the French-windows; pallor on their whiskered faces.

CHAPTER V

A ROUGH NIGHT FOR THE "SAILORS' BALL"

ON the same evening, Matilda Shaxton, sitting at her toilette, was hailed by her husband from his dressing-room with the remark: "Have you seen Sir William Heans this week?"

Matilda answered: "Sir William was here to-day, Paul."

"Looking well?"

"Yes—pretty well."

"Daunt has got a beastly story of his being mixed up in some affray in Tout Street, at a gambling-room. He oughtn't to go there." Matilda smiled in a wild way, and the tears pressed into her eyes. "Was Mr. Daunt stern about it?"

"Daunt says it's a bad downward step. He protested he would come against all sorts of undesirables there: prisoners, low ship's-officers, and drunken soldiers. Some of the prisoners are Government constables, and they listen to what a prisoner says when he's taken too much, and watch whom he associates with. He'll have to be doubly careful if he haunts those places. Daunt says Heans hadn't been inside the door a half an hour when he was told of it. The police don't like his airs. Half of this is Daunt's *hocus pocus*, but it's a pity to think of its getting about. I told Daunt to close his mouth about it. He's" (chuckling suddenly) "not fond of Sir William Heans."

"Was he—was he gambling his money?" asked Mrs. Shaxton, putting up her soft hair.

"Yes, and drinking more than was good for him—if all's true. He came out with a convict named Carnt—a swindler of all people—and a shady fellow named Stiff, who's been suspected of connivance in escape, and lost a schooner and twenty lives off the Iron Pot. Went to his rooms. He mustn't take up with those fellows—can't you go for him about it, Matty?"

Mrs. Shaxton's prisoner-maid was arranging her mistress's lace with impassive face. Matilda turned her head aside and a sudden sob shook her. "Is it too tight, madam?" said the woman, pausing and looking up, and seeing her mistress's eyes, she bowed her head and continued.

"Mr. Daunt is so stern now," Matilda called, with a little quaver of fear. "I don't know what is coming to him. I used to think him brave and just."

"Gracious G—d, bring these fellows up against a prisoner, and out come their claws! Daunt comes up here with his police-brand in his pocket, and he can't help testing it against Heans. But Daunt's a careful man. He wouldn't say a thing like that if it hadn't some truth in it."

"Yes," said Matilda, "but he's very stern, and very clever. He might exaggerate. He has not been kind in his manner to Sir William Heans. You remember he was here when Sir William first called. He intimated to me, when he was shown in, that he was not very desirable. Oh, I was so glad I had Miss Gairdener's letter!"

"Egad—that's what he said, is it! What do you think he said to me on Thursday? Ho-ho!—he said he didn't like his manners towards you—Mrs. Providence! Yes, I laughed. 'Speaking of a nunnery,' says I, 'it must have been virulent if Mrs. Providence passed it!'

"Ah, poor Heans!" said Shaxton, in a lower key; "he's paying heavily for that business. Talk of dignity—people are always asking a fellow to know who he is! Higgs of the *Guiding Star* was asking me only last week (ho-ho-ho!) if it was the military commandant! There was Heans riding by with his eyeglass. Hanged if I know what to tell them!"

"And—was he drinking—Sir William Heans?"

"I don't think he was taking much—singing a song and that. (Where are my dancing-pumps?) Made 'em all laugh the way he sang—so stiff and such a funny little dandy voice. I'd ha' given (bah! there's no buckling this cravat!)—I'd ha' given a quid—he-he—to have seen Heans singing."

Mrs. Shaxton threw open her jewel-case, and fingered blindly among its contents. Her wild and determined eyes were on themselves in the glass. Her fingers slipped through pearls and garnets, and caught upon an old silver cross. This she drew out, and clasped by its hanger about her neck. It seemed too heavy for that frail pillar, but not yet for those wild eyes.

"Oh, Paul, he is in terrible danger!" she said, as she put on her long ear-rings. "I must see Mr. Daunt and try and win him over. Sir William Heans is very sensitive. His manner is all fineness and bravery. Perhaps—perhaps Mr. Daunt could privately shut those places to him. It is just their terrible temptation!"

"No—no," answered Hyde-Shaxton. "Be careful how you interfere with a man's liberty. He's little enough of it—poor fellow, and jealous enough of that, I suppose. Think of it, after the way he was lionized in London! I'd put it to him yourself. He's very fond of you, Matilda. Get him up here on Friday (I'll be up at Risdon with a surveying party). Tell him that story about Megson and Relph, who were sent to Macquarie Harbour. Stay a moment, you've never heard that. Wait till I get this cravat buckled. It's bad, but it's Gospel truth. They

were men of his own station, you know. It began, as I told you, by their going to those low places."

Captain Shaxton here related a story which, for those interested, will be found at the end.¹ When he had done so, his voice dropped away, and for a while there was silence. Outside there was a pattering sound and a low roaring of the wind.

"Poor Miss Gairdener——" said Matilda, in a trembling tone, and then broke off. Presently her brave voice cried out: "I cannot bear to think of Sir William Heans even touching these places!"

"I can't think of the handsome old 'Marquis' on the downward path at all," chuckled Shaxton, in a subdued way, "though it's getting an oldish tale with him, I suppose. I can't help seeing the joke of it, though, gracious G—d! it can be a black business. What would he do with his eye-glass at Port Arthur—ho, ho! It tickles me to think of it!"

"Don't!"

"Bless you, he's too fastidious! There's no danger!"

"Oh, do not!"

"Egad, it would be like thinking of somebody who was buried in a chimney-pot!"

No answer came from Mrs. Shaxton. There was a sound as of the Captain rising from a chair in his dressing-room.

"Beastly night, Matty! Wasn't that sleet on the windows? Ha," he cried, "there's the carriage! Hurry up!" Then in the distance, as he opened his door: "Be kind to the poor fellow, Matty; he's got no decent woman but you to go to. You're not very kind to him—are you? Short—or something! He's out here alone. You've been treating him to some of your high moods, haven't you now?"

He seemed to wait in the passage for an answer, but none went to him. In her room Matilda whispered, "God forbid!" as, with pale throat up, she wound a shawl about her cheeks and side-curls.

¹ Note 2. p. 417.

CHAPTER VI

FIDUS ACHATES

ONE evening in the month before these happenings, Heans, returning frozen in mind and heart from a lonely vigil upon the terrace at Pitt's Villa, had unlocked his little cabin chest of drawers, and taken from a pigeon-hole at the back of the desk £20 in gold and notes. Hitherto, in his precarious respectability, he had solaced his evenings with a little wine, a tobacco-pipe, and those more congenial inhabitants of the "jail": the green-marbled volumes of Langhorne's *Plutarch*. Of the latter, the shrewd worldly sense, truth, and determination to be interesting amazed him, and with a little more ease in his day-lit life, he might have passed his evenings in this quiet way. Now his pipe and his wine, together with a volume of *Plutarch* open at the life of Themistocles, lay set for him on the gilt-legged table beside the bare chimney. A silver pocket-comb lay across the page below the following remarkable passage: "For when elected Admiral by the Athenians, he would not despatch any business, whether public or private, singly, but put off affairs to the day he was to embark, that having a great deal to do, he might appear with the greater dignity and importance."

In connection with these books, Sir William had discovered a curious old Colonial manuscript, which had given him considerable food for thought, and for some time highly, and almost entirely, engrossed his mind. In turning over, one evening, the second book of the set, he came upon an MS. letter, written across the white paper which covered the inside of the back. The caligraphy was strange and not readily decipherable—part of it, if not all, written in agitation—the ink, or whatever the pigment, faded to faint sepia. But if the ink was old, the passion and agonised bereavement in which the lines were steeped were as fresh as when written. Their sublime force, seemingly, would last as long as the writing could be read.

It was written in a species of loose print, closely resembling the letters we see cut on tombstones, known as Old English; and done rather from habit, one would say, than with idea of elaboration. In that style, therefore, we reproduce it, though giving a somewhat colder and far less intimate impression than the grim and untrammelled original. Here follows, then, the letter which

Sir William found of such engrossing interest, and the romantic "directions" written above it:—

Gully-hole. Nov. 23rd. Walk here 11 on 1st. Famine Assembly 5 after 10. Hope you not hungry.

Gully-hole. Dec. 7th. Wander by here 11th. 25 after 2.

Gully-hole. Dec. 16th. Wander here 23rd. Foot-boy J.S. sharpening eyes on me. Don't give him more of your coins.

Gully-hole. Dec. 30th. You sadden me. Don't forsake me. Did you give Spars money? Muster Roll Jan. 5th, 4.

Gully-hole. Jan. 20th. If no answer, don't hang about the hole. For answer I will hammer three times thrice. Alarm Assembly 5 after 4. 27th.

In the Cave. Jan. 29th.

My angel Moicrime,

I hear you are to be punished, and sent away to camp-life with the black, Ondia. This you have never known, you so dainty reared, so much petted by the grand folk. Oh, my darling, I can't consider of it! I am so terrible sad. The agony this causes me, I cannot tell you! I am in Hell. My heart is swelling with fury. You, my darling Moicrime, degraded to camp-life, what will happen to you, what shall I do! I am to be whipped and confined for the while—perhaps for ever—out of the garden. They have shut me in the cave. Damnation seize them—if they put me to my chisel again, I will do something awful! His Honour shall know of me. I will carve something awful out of these men-stones.

Oh Moicrime, my poor, my dear Moicrime, I shall win after you or die! Peter Naut will pass this to Joe, for Joe to put in the Gully-hole, in case you wander by once more.

Your despairing

WALTER SURRIDGE.

P.S.—When Spars reads this, if he do not put it in your hands by my oath, he'll know of me.

W. SURRIDGE.

Here was an interesting relic, the date and mystery of which much occupied Sir William. A grim romance, the place, date, and meaning of which were obscure, of the secret attachment of a prisoner artificer for a young native girl, and its attendant tragedy, seemed clear. Sir William, being of an elegant turn, thought of Pyramus and Thisbe: "Wall, that vile Wall, which did these lovers sunder." "Did he escape?" he would ask—somewhat ruefully puffing his new tobacco-pipe among the web,

hung chairs: "did he escape, or did he weep away his wild and angry heart in his cavern?" And she, was her love equal to his (Indeed, God forfend!), or did she soon forget the white man's petting, and find a charm in the way of her blood and people? Such passion interested Sir William—interested and indeed, if it did more than entertain, perhaps enlightened him. Poor love's young dream! Those were grimmer days! Well, well—how long may a man live in the romance of another?

At about eight o'clock Sir William drank two glasses of wine, and descended the rickety stairs as decorously as the height of the ceiling, his dignity, and the darkness would permit. His grey top-hat bumps against a beam, falls, and must be groped for. With a knocking upon the street door, the tragic landlady comes up from the nether regions with a key in her hand. She opens the door and looks after her lodger. Her rough hand, which rests on the post, shakes a little. Heans turned down the street a few yards, and then hurried along a series of back lanes towards the sea. The rain was pattering chillily, and he put up his umbrella. Just where the waves began to lash at the bottom of the road, and a chemist's red light was dipping, he turned to his left into a sort of court-yard, and approached the door of an out-house built against the hill. A man was hovering near the door, and he came in front of it with a sweeping quietness as Heans arrived. With his hand on the handle, he opened the door a little so that a bright light fell on Sir William's hat and plaid neck-cloth.

Heans pressed a few pence into his hand, asking if these were ✓ "Fraser's Rooms." There was a subdued noise of nasal voices within, and a sudden shrill laugh; a soft grating as of metal spoons, and the sharp ringing of a little bell. The door was opened and shut behind Heans. Within there was a smell of damp broadcloth. He found himself in a vestibule boarded-off to the width of the building, in which some Benjamins and cloaks were hanging upon pegs. Inside, in a long, squarish room, whose walls were shabbily if ingeniously covered with green baize picked out with framings of pink tape, he found many tragically grave flushed men, sitting or standing round a green table, on which was a splash of cards, and roughly drawn in red and yellow chalk, the compartments and four diamonds of *Trente-et-quarante*. Across from this table two others swam in the smoke, upon the nearest of which a chalk line about the cloth edge told that *Faro* was in play. The farthest had a plain wooden surface and was haunted by a grim and shabby crew. Here was being whirled, by individuals in turn, a large wooden top, having four corners marked T (totem), A (all), N (none), and P (pay), the stakes being coppers, sleeve-buttons, snuff-boxes, sham seals, sham neck-chains, and even squares of Caporal or Cavendish tobacco. There was a bar beside the first table, where an attendant in brownish knee-breeches and a white

frock-coat was opening a bottle : the while keeping an eye on the game. At the top of the room were two lloo tables, at one of which a silent party of five was seated. A sort of tragic and polite sternness was the more general fashion of this place of entertainment. The dark, shabby-grand room was a House of Hideous Risk, and the men who walked in it had the faces, many of them, and the brave diplomacy of men besieged in a hopeless hold.

Sir William changed some money at the bar, drank a glass of wine, and strolled over to the table. He presently took his seat on the form nearest the "taillier," shouldering along a young wild man with black whiskers who was sprawling on his elbow.

"Have a care," the fellow growled, in a flashing mutter.

"I must have room," said Sir William, seating himself not very gently. The other with a sour snarl gave his back to him, subsiding again a little further down with his elbow on the table. There was an air of character and individuality about the inmates of this gaming-room which a general sameness of napless top-hat and shabby short frock or surtout could not wholly subdue. There seemed a predominance of charming people with quick strong smiles and flashing teeth; so many seemed to touch, but yet fall short of, the status of an accomplished gentleman. The bow and the smile would be a trace too low and too wide; the air a little too sharp. Even the most forlorn and tragic loser seemed yet to possess the faculty of suddenly and brilliantly smiling.

A fine, tall, pale man, dark, with a handsome countenance creased by tragic worry, rose angrily on the other side, crying: "You are surly, Jarvis; give Sir William room."

The other sat down again without a glance at Heans. It was Henry S——, a well-known gentleman of Bristol, here a writer in one of the public departments, transported for life for forgery, deserted by his wife, and predestined to undergo the second sentence of Port Arthur and die there in the hospital.

Among others punting at the Faro table were several officers in military cloaks and shakoes, very much the worse for liquor. These young men kept jesting among themselves, and staking wildly. The web was evidently yet a joke and a pleasure to them.

The dealer was a plump, dark Jew, very handsome and sleepy-looking. This was "Fraser," the owner of the place, so drowsy, so ready to be blind when necessary, such a manager of men. His was one of those personalities, cited by a great statesman, in the category of "diplomats, women and crabs," as always going when coming, always coming when going. When he beamed, things were all over with you; when he frowned, you were not yet his. He was one of the few people in his grim rooms whose meteoric history had not formed the theme (and

was not still) of some wild crime or scandal. Fraser's history was mysteriously untragic.

Sir William's shepherd-plaid trousers commanded something of a sensation. Eyes shot glances at him, and shot back to play again. There was a groan in some of them; in others a curious birdlike interest; in some yet a black, angry look; in others a sticky and obsequious welcome. The "banker" made a heavy inclination towards him, and then proceeded to deal the cards.

Heans staked alternately on *Couleur* and *Inverse*, but lost as persistently. The man beside him, who had been addressed as "Jarvis," changed his cheek for his chin as the game went on, and watched Sir William's play with a sort of sulky and despairing cynicism. By slow graduations his face, with its respectable little black whiskers and die-away air, changed a little. His expression of snarling dislike dropped gradually to a snarling blasé tolerance. This did not seem designed altogether to put Sir William off his play. Though the man was visibly younger than the new-comer, there was a worldly fatherliness in his cynical demeanour.

"You bore me with your play, sir," he said at last, in a hissing undertone. "There are the red and black. Why lose with such monotony?" Sir William pushed along to him a half-crown bit. "Put that on the red or black, if you wish it," he said.

The other, not moving his cheek from his hand, took the coin and tossed it on the black. Heans, meanwhile, continued staking as before. The man named Carnt won another half-crown. Throwing the two coins on the red he won four. Then with the four, eight. With the eight, sixteen. With sixteen (staked with the same appearance of tolerant cynicism) £4. He then pushed back a half-crown to Heans, who staked it, with a nod of thanks, upon the *Inverse*, and lost it.

At this moment S—— rose and asked Heans by name if he would make one for a game of loo. Heans, with a glare through his eyeglass at S——, bowed and began to gather up what change remained to him. S—— then asked Carnt if he would join them, but Carnt, who was playing with his wins on the table-edge, shook his head, stating that he had a whimsey to start a charitable institution. At this the other stepped backward over the form, and beckoning to a man with a fixed grim stare of enquiring disapproval—probably a natural feature helped by art and practice—and to a little pale fellow with a tremendous air, led the way to one of the tables at the top of the room. The gentlemen so summoned rose and followed with deprecatory coughs of acquiescence. Heans sat at play with these three and another (a silent man who through the evening stared for long periods at every one in turn with strange fixed eyes) till a late hour.

At about eleven there was a scattering of men about Sir

William's table. The four were playing still, and there was spirit beside them. The new-comer had been loo-ed constantly, but in the last quarter of an hour the tide had turned and Heans was not so far from making good. About this time there was an attempt on the part of a little clique of men behind S—— to hustle Heans with several careful but, of course, impalpable rudenesses. A funny fellow with a strange, unsmiling face had placed a paper eyeglass in his eye, and was cutting a jocose caper in the shadow of a friend. They would ponder with a burlesque heaviness when Sir William pondered, and nearly collapse in their ecstasies of wild anticipation when Sir William elected to play. A lank, black Jew, who was standing at S——'s elbow, made a false signal to Sir William as to the number of that gentleman's trumps by holding up four fingers against his chin and slowly spreading them up his cheek. When the luck was with him they were careful to show their tolerant acquiescence; when against him, their sudden antagonism and unveiled contempt. Heans became conscious, presently, that an old decrepit man was seated in a chair a little way back and outward from his elbow. A glance at him showed high aristocratic if dissipated features and an impressive dignity. He was too far from the table to admit an objection to his presence, and yet near enough to make it difficult for Heans to conceal his cards. As if to himself, Heans heard him murmur: "Rowdyism, eh?" and presently, in an angry whisper: "Too much intoxication here to-night." On several occasions he spoke a critical word upon the game, but always heavily and impersonally, if with a touch of age's privilege. A small eruption from S——'s backers screwed from him the indignant mutter that "the place was rapidly being made uncongenial for the older men." Unfortunately for his bona-fides, he pronounced uncongenial as "uncongeni-al;" and this mistake rioted in Heans' ears.

Heans was much embarrassed by the presence of this friendly, quiet-speaking, yet, he was certain, evil-intentioned man. Beyond the flurry of an actual protest, he could, however, think of no way of ridding himself of it. Meanwhile the unrelieved antagonism was beginning to tell upon his play; he made several slips, though his cards were good.

Every faculty he possessed was now engaged in his play. His luck holding, he won on the next two deals; and he was conscious of a private chuckle in his ear, and a secret pat from the old man upon his chair-back. On the next round—which was "unlimited" and all players playing—he lost remarkably and of course heavily.

Earlier in the game Sir William's tranquillity had been a little steadied by the approach of Carnt, the gambler to whom he had lent money. He had caught his figure among the others round S——, his arms folded, his rusty top-hat cocked over a morose eye. Now, as he played, he had a strange vision. Once and again, in the course of that disastrous deal, he fancied he had caught a fresh glimpse of Carnt, but with his face yellow with anger, and

standing close in to the right of the table, his eyes bent with a curious intentness on some spot on a level with Heans' shoulder. Sir William, fierce as was the game, several times shrugged his right shoulder under the influence of this strange impression.

Suddenly, during a fresh deal, when Heans, being elder hand, holding back two trumps in sequence, nine and seven (S——, sitting opposite, having taken the first trick with the eight of trumps), and winning the second, finessing with his seven—at that moment, there was a sharp scream like a sheep's bleat, and his chair was violently pushed forward. Springing round in it, with anger and promptitude, he discovered Carnt with one hand holding the old man's hand against the chair, with its index finger waving over Hean's back, while with the other he threatened to impale it with an open penknife. There was an outcry of anger about the table, but whether for the liver-coloured, chattering old man, or against him, was not clear. Carnt's triumphant, angry, yet amused face, was calm and pale. "You know me, Rudstone," he hissed. "Keep it still or by Heaven I'll split it! Here S——, here's a trump; look! Egad, a big one! See it wriggle!"

"Who's a cheat in his liquor?" someone called from the Totem-table.

"Begad, Mr. Jarvis is the Christian when he's sober!"

"A—h—twitch away, would you!" said Carnt. "You scandalous blackguard! Take that, then!" There was a horrid scream, and the old man, suddenly released, hobbled out of the room, holding a maimed hand.

S—— had risen, tall and noble, beside his chair.

"I hope," he said, turning huskily on the rowdies, "that you will understand, gentlemen, how great a service has been done to this room by Mr. Jarvis Carnt. The treachery on our visitor, to-night, was no greater than the detestable insult offered to me." He graciously bent forward over the table.

"Your hand, Carnt—a very noble service, sir."

Carnt was glooming at his knife. "You know my practice, S——," said he. "I never shake hands in this place."

Sir William, still turned in his chair, was eyeing Carnt with his rather queer eyeglass. Slowly he drew out and proffered him a fine chequered silk handkerchief. "Take my handkerchief," he said, "and clean your knife." Carnt took the article; drew the knife through it; pondered over it a moment; and then threw it under the chairs. Sir William laid down his cards, and bowing to S——, the little important man, the disapproving gentleman, and the man with the silent examining eyes who was at the moment examining S—— (all of whom returned his bow not much disturbed), gathered up his change, and rosé. Carnt was moving away down the room, and Sir William pushed after him through pale faces and charming teeth. Fraser, standing near the bar, bowed with a sort of deference in his grave smile.

"Mr. Carnt, it is barely the half hour," said Heans. "A word and a glass of wine."

The back of the other's clawhammer seemed inclined to move on without answer, but suddenly turning, disclosed a pair of dark harassed eyes and a slow pale smile. "What's this?" he said. "Wine?"

"What have they got?" said Sir William, drawing his arm through his in his stately way.

"All sorts," said Carnt, rubbing his blue hands over the counter. "There's an old brandy somewhere. Fraser, here's a specially bad case! This gentleman honours us by treading the inclined plane in our company. Let us fittingly celebrate his first step. What about French Sally! Is she extant?"

That giddy party known as Fraser, with a moment's stern glare at Heans, suddenly bowed and came with a simpering ceremony into the bar, where he procured from a back cupboard a green coloured flask. From this, with care and mystery, he filled two glasses with a liquid the colour of bronze—putting these before the two "gentlemen" as from one who regretfully but finally confers. Carnt was still grey of face from what he had done, and Sir William, with a grave if somewhat voluble tact, discussed with him the intricacies of a certain game of "Patience," in the moves of which the other made an effort to become engrossed. S—— brought his friends to the bar, and owing to Sir William's increasing volubility, the conversation soon became general. Half an hour later the bar was thronged, and a low ship's-captain named Stiff, with a tiny mouth and a beautiful silvery voice, was singing a French song. Sir William Heans was (with little difficulty) induced to follow this friendly gentleman—a luckless skipper of wrecks and suborner of absconders—with a ballad given in a very small formal pipe. Carnt alone did not seem happy in these amenities. He stood with his arms folded against the bar, white and bored. At Sir William's invitation not only Carnt and Captain Stiff, but a pawnbroker and bric-à-brac man, of the curious name of Six, accompanied him to his room.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BIRTHDAY BALL

As they descended in the carriage, over the quiver and shriek of the heavy break, with now a splash of sleety rain and once a boom of thunder, a tragic idea came to Matilda, that if she could manage it, she would speak with sympathetic Lady Franklin about Sir William Heans, and see if some organising secretaryship or honorary post could not be obtained for him by which he would be bound among a better set, and the suffrages of "one side" of Hobarton society be gradually opened to him. She put it to herself as "one side." There was another side of Hobarton society over which she was aware the Governor's wife had less power, and with whom a prisoner had less chance: that of the old families, led by Mr. Montague, the Colonial Secretary, whose famous quarrel with Sir John Franklin was already simmering above the surface.¹ Matilda, though she disliked her pretty ladyship's stern and masculine attitude, her ill advised and too forcible championing of her husband, yet believed her at bottom a kind-hearted, sensible personage, and like many another distracted woman, determined to penetrate the attitude and besiege the good for her purpose.

At the wharf they descended into the *Erebus*, the high pent-house awnings of the Arctic ship glowing and tugging in the lowering night. The moon shone for an instant on Kangaroo Point. It was all half-wild. Flying, gauzy clouds sped across the light blue satin of the sky. The sea was green-black, flecked with foam about the shores, and crying free. There were a few—a few silver stars.

The quarter-deck was hung with bunting, giving a fine floor broken only by the companion-way; while astern, a beflagged opening gave to two small rest-rooms, where among the decorations stood the embowered wheel. The grim, clean smell of hemp and tar exuded from the walls, upon which were sewn

¹As early as 1830 Lieut. Breton, R.N., writes that Hobarton society was more exclusive than that of "an English town." "If, however, a person can obtain one or two good letters of introduction he may get on well enough with both the aristocracy and the merchants, though decidedly better with the last."

great laurel wreaths of silver paper, with the motto: *Animo et Fide* (misread by the jealous landmen for "Ann and Fido"), while across from screen to screen great ropes of monthly roses, hung by the young ladies of Hobarton, met a fine wreath hanging from the centre.

Perhaps no decoration could have been discovered so moving to the hearts of the men and women gathered there as this mingling of bunting and roses—the scent of flowers and stern hemp and tar. Franklin himself must have thought of it when, years after, he walked the deck caught in the ice of William's Land. Everywhere were immaculate white breeches and waistcoats; the plain beside the epauletted coat. The whiskered sailors jested merrily in their high cravats. Little ladies looked up out of chignons and swinging curls. The ship suddenly shook with thunder, under which the wave of cheerful voices clattered shrill and unmoved. A band began bumping in a corner.

In the ballroom things happened very differently from what she expected. Her ladyship was unwell, and Miss Sophia Crackcroft, who had taken her place beside Captain Ross, was, at their entrance, somewhat flurried by the congratulations of another party. Swarthy, round-faced Sir John Franklin himself, with Mr. Bedford, the Colonial Chaplain, and old Mr. Duterreau, the artist of the natives, came forward to receive them. On the very edge of distraction as she was, Sir John took her wild and pretty face for a picture of enthusiasm, and gallantly jested with her as "the presumptive belle of this occasion." "You make me," he said, "regret my young days, madam." She curtsied and laughed, and from her mourning heart returned some witty answer, which, echoing among the men, and in her husband's chuckles, made a little triumph for her, at the feet of which his gallant Excellency begged a dance, and put that still unsilenced name upon her programme for a quadrille.

Sir John strode up the deck with round, bare, cheery face. Behind him, among a little group of uniforms, went a thin, active man, clad in black, and leaning on a Neapolitan cane. His brow was dark, and now and then he gave a low, most courteous bow. It was Mr. Montague, the Colonial Secretary.

Matilda Shaxton, as she danced with this or that sailor, or discoursed on the wildness of the night with some old police-magistrate or bronzed young settler, watched the Governor's face as he slowly talked his way through the room, and suddenly, in the midst of a discharge of sleet which nearly drowned the music, made up her mind to lay Sir William's case before the tragic kindness of it. Her ears were used to ridicule among her associates on the "softness" of Sir John's prison legislation, and although her instinct warned her that this was the exaggeration of harsh, experienced men, and that he was a ruler with plenty of sternness where his just-heartedness or anger called for it, yet she was certain if she could chance upon

a subject that would help her in bringing up a prisoner's name, she would be met with kindness. As she looked or laughed into this or that stern or beseeching face—for wild-eyed Matilda had a belle's triumph to-night—she quivered inwardly at each thunder-clap and gust of wind, and saw the prison-cutter plunge out upon it with the fallen, gale-deafened Megson and Relph—out upon a yellow sea towards the bare, wind-blown ditch of Macquarie Harbour. How could these kind-eyed sailors, these fine old magistrates, witty Mr. Montague, satirical Mr. Daunt, gallant Colonel Snodgrass, honest Sir John himself—these feeling gentlemen—jig and jest, while a fellow, a man more gently reared than themselves, tottered and struggled, so bravely and so much alone, upon the brink of terror and ruin? She would tell that man there if she could, the one with the round ugly face and tragic eyes (eyes which seemed yet to harbour the glory and smoke of Trafalgar and Copenhagen)—she would tell him what temptations and dangers were at the proud feet of this gentleman, and how no hand troubled to stay them. In her bosom she had a letter of Miss Gairdener's. The old woman wrote how her nephew, Sir William Heans, had been loved and honoured by his tenants. The letter was full of loving admiration, chattering hope, and brave proud humour, and though it never so much as hinted at his fast life or his disgrace, was palpably the wail of his own people for a loved and trusted figure brought low by a sin which for some reason—some woman's reason—they found not unforgivable. This letter, with its garrulous, well-bred recommending of a favourite and petted nephew, its purposeful gnoring or innocent misunderstanding of his hideous disgrace or danger, so increased by its innocence the horror of possible catastrophe as to constitute an argument for his succour—and such protection as a woman might need who stood forward with his name on her lips.

Matilda, so determined and loving-hearted, was perhaps too confident in her woman's armour of precocious experience. Her friend, the Superintendent, Mr. Daunt, in speaking of women, has said of her wittily that "she hardly resorted to the evasive with the accustomed roguishness." She seemed, in a word, to have an unnatural distaste for "practising," even where the interests of those she loved were concerned. This is, I suspect, as much as should be expected of any good woman, just as we may well expect something more, in like difficulty, than the lying, stab-in-the-back methods, the treacherous use of youth's belief in her saintship, of the ordinary wicked one. Surely life holds few contrasting facts so confusing as its vulgar-minded woman—than which no man can be so little or so base—and its angel, rich or poor.

Daunt arrived very late, but Matilda, though her programme was full, gave him a little walk between two dances. He was very kind and amusing, until quite suddenly he began to talk

about Sir William Heans: "We are somewhat bothered about Heans," he said, with his eyes on his excellent white breeches as he walked. "I am afraid you will not thank me for dragging in a business matter to-night, but may I ask you a question—about him?"

Matilda, who supposed, in a breath of fear, he referred to the affray her husband had mentioned, said: "Oh, certainly. But my husband heard all he has told me from you. What do you want?"

"Nothing more than I can almost prove, Mrs. Shaxton, I am glad to say. I think he was up at your house, was he not, on the 27th?"

"Yes—on the 27th," she said, with a sort of shivering gladness. "I am sorry I wasn't in. But what is the reason for proving that?"

"I have no reason yet. It is just the curse of my work that I have to go round poking in my nose where I have no business. It was a wet afternoon, and he arrived at your house—say—at three o'clock."

Matilda caught him looking at her with a pale, sharp deference. "No, it was later than that—half-past four. He has usually been early." She caught her breath and pondered a moment. Then rapidly, with precision, "I wonder whether I am right. He has been up so often. It was possibly half-past three—on that day. Indeed, I could discover the time from the servants. What is it about, Mr. Daunt?"

"It is nothing. Since this business at Fraser's we have been deluged with information about your friend. It is always the way when a prisoner takes a foolish step of the kind, and we must sift it all. You would be surprised at the vicious rubbish which has reached us. If you could give Sir William a hint to be careful who he mixes with—above all to be constant in his punctuality."

"Yes, I can tell him that."

"These men are so devilish clever at inventing the likely." There was a look almost of pity in his dark and deferent gaze.

"We may not know then," she said, "this new rumour against Sir William Heans?"

"I would not assail your hearing with it," he said, in an indifferent tone. "Don't think any more about it, madam. Only for a while it would save us a world of trouble if he is careful to take his pleasure in your direction." In the midst of music he bowed and went off, friendly, smiling, if a little drawn and stern. Matilda, as she turned to look for her next partner, drew a deep breath. Indeed, she could have cried out, The strange man's rumours and warnings, the double-meanings she knew him to employ, his kind actions, his excellent cleverness, his deferent, polite, sharp eyes, his lawful activity, filled her with distrust. She knew him for an alarmist; a man who,

if with a sharp guard upon himself, instinctively exaggerated. While dismissing much that he said as a sort of fussiness, her excitement for Sir William, facing unknowingly this man's activity (this man's—was it jealousy or stern probity?) was feverishly increased.

At that moment the great Mr. Montague, ambling by with his tremendous coat-collars and high old-fashioned airs, bowed low to her, saying: "What a fey night! Only we Derwenters would think of dragging out our ladies to dance in a storm!"

There was a hoarse growl of thunder.

She bowed towards his dark, experienced, weighing eyes. "We women, sir," she said, "must think of it as part of the brave decorations."

"Flags and guns—good! good!" He laughed a quick, dry laugh. "The convicts have it," he said, "that the devil has a fort of his own up on Old Storm Hill. Listen! There they go! 'You'll see the smoke of 'em hanging about his old head in tomorrow's sun.'" He laughed and nodded himself away.

Immediately after the next dance, Shaxton called to Matilda that Sir John was "exploring" for her. She at once walked more towards the centre of the room that he might see her, her heart beating painfully. He came towards her, his round, swarthy face rather strained upon the short neck, but very dignified, with those splendid tragic eyes which had seen men languish, and yet had drawn the weak body beneath them from camps of the dead—came to her—she, Matilda Shaxton—and bent to her that small limb of flesh and blood which was to stiffen against years and acres of white sleet, and at last to hold fast among those howling winds—a monument—for good.

The east wind was pulling and harshing at the awnings, the ship was groaning at her ropes, and the thought came to her: "These wonderful men!"

Up the room a rather severe and dignified set of notabilities were preparing for a set of quadrilles. She recognised Mr. Montague, Captain Crozier of the *Terror*, the Colonial Surgeon, and Mr. Bichino. The fans of several ladies fluttered upon her with some wonder, but whether at Sir John's choice, or some visible sign of the excitement and anguish that was in her heart, she cared little. Sir John called some jests at her in the intervals of the music; but on whole he seemed distraight, with a fierce eye upon his dignity.

As she danced, she learnt something of the little treacheries which assail the great. A glance at Mr. Montague's pale face, strangely attenuated; at his malignant smile; at his eye, which never touched Sir John Franklin's; at his carefully pruned and deliberate dignity; above all at his grim unreadiness, which infinitesimally kept the dance waiting on him, reminded her of the rumours of political trouble, and (as had been whispered by Mr.

Montague himself) "of a local North-West Passage still undiscovered by Sir John."

The rain stopped with the music, and Matilda, suddenly very pale, was led by Sir John to a flagged-off enclosure about the wheel. There he took his seat beside her upon a couch. Beside themselves, there were two old ladies, with fine, remote faces, talking serenely in a corner. An aide-de-camp came quietly to the door, looked in upon his chief in a troubled manner, and as quietly departed.

Feverishly excited, and with only a short time in which to bring up her plea, Matilda turned to Sir John and expressed for a second time her regret at Lady Franklin's indisposition. She continued that she had hoped to have spoken to Lady Franklin about a prisoner—a sort of relation of her family—about whom the Hon. Miss Gairdener had written from England. She had wished to ask her ladyship if she could help him a little. It was a gentleman of good family who was likely to go under for want of a few friends and a more congenial atmosphere. She and her husband had done what they could, but some one in authority only could save him from his sensitiveness to his position, by perhaps giving him some little literary secretaryship or organising work. She took then the letter from the breast of her gown and put it in the Governor's hands as he sat beside her somewhat amazed.

"It is there, sir, the Hon. Miss Gairdener speaks of this gentleman," she said, in a low violent voice, approaching tears.

Sir John took the letter and opened it. As he began to read it, he said: "It is not easy to do anything for these men." Suddenly he let it dangle from his fingers, and looked up and outward. "Do I not know that name?" he said: "Heans? Pray wait a minute."

He seemed to recollect something and began slowly to fold up the letter. His face seemed to have deepened in tragedy a shade. Matilda must have seen this. Her head drooped a little. "We have known Sir William Heans since his arrival here," she said, a faint trace too desperately; "it has been dreadful to see the difficulties a man in his position is faced with. Up to now he has bravely resisted temptation to join the lower clubs—though he is entirely alone."

Beneath his formality, the Governor's dark face, under its auburn hair, had taken a stunned look. He was very polite and spoke in a low voice. "I don't know what to say, Mrs. Shaxton. This letter in my hand" (his voice quavered) "is not the story I have heard."

The blood rushed to Matilda's face: "No," she said, "but that letter shows how the prisoner was respected and loved in his own family. Miss Gairdener asks our help for her nephew. I knew Miss Gairdener. She is a dear old woman. She would not—she would not ask a favour——"

"For anyone unworthy of it?" said Sir John. He raised his hands in a foreign sort of way. "Oh these old mothers, madam!"

Matilda was silent for a long while.

At length Sir John said kindly: "How old now is your experience of this Sir William Heans?"

"He has been often to our house, Sir John Franklin," she answered, "being engaged with my husband on some prison plans. And we have encouraged him as much as we could to come to us. Lately the plans have been put aside and engagements with the explorers have claimed a great deal of our time. We have seen much less of Sir William Heans. Oh, I think it must sometimes have seemed as if his only friends had forsaken him! And I fear his loneliness has driven him to one of the halls where cards are played. It seems such a little thing—if a man could be kept straight, and such a terrible—terrible thing if he goes wrong—in this place."

Sir John nodded several times in a sort of tragic confirmation, but his mind was not in it. He got up and took a quick, sedate walk past her: his head bowed. As he came back he glanced up at the pretty, determined face of his partner out of anxious eyes, and though the glance was still veiled with politeness, seemed to see something that quieted them. He re-seated himself, inclining towards her with plain kindness.

"A woman who has the courage to come to me," he said, "with a word for a man of such a reputation shall have what aid my wife and I can give her. As you must know, a prisoner not only needs courage, but indeed immaculate behaviour, to even touch on the fringes of the proud little society here. There is strong prejudice against the name. You have much troubled me, Mrs. Shaxton, by this tremulous handwriting" (he gave her back the letter), "and by the danger of this man. I promise you I will see a Superintendent of Police, who is, I think, here this evening, and if this Sir William Heans has done nothing worse than some preliminary haunting of gambling rooms, some organising matter may be found for him."

He rose again, hesitated an instant, and passed over to the door of the ballroom. Pausing there, he beckoned, and the young aide-de-camp appeared. Him he dismissed with an order and returned. On the quarter-deck, the band began suddenly blaring, and the two old ladies, as if fascinated by the old summons, rose and tottered with smiles and trembling yellow ringlets towards it.

"I have sent for the officer," said Sir John Franklin. "He will tell us in two words all we want to know. Who are those two old angels, Mrs. Shaxton?"

"It is old Mrs. Ordway, of Saltin Island, and Miss Meurice, sir," said Matilda, who was near to weeping. "Thank you—thank you, sir, for doing so much for our prisoner. But," she

added, hastily, "if the police-officer is Mr. Daunt, he knows Sir William Heans well and has often met him at our house."

At that moment Daunt entered from the ballroom with the aide-de-camp, and the Governor rose and went forward a little way to meet him. They were out of earshot, but Matilda was reassured much by the quiet ease of Daunt's face as he talked, and the look of helpful friendliness and familiar acquaintance he several times threw towards her. They stood a short time talking earnestly. Presently Sir John turned and came rather heavily towards her. "It can be done—possibly, Mrs. Shaxton," he said. "Mr. Daunt says he thinks the news of Sir William Heans is satisfactory, and that he has as clean a bill of health as himself. I am glad of this." (Yet he did not smile.) "Accept my compliments for a brave woman." He offered her his arm, and she rose and took it. They passed Daunt as they traversed the little enclosure, and he gave a brisk shadow of a smile and a nice little bow. There was something so pleasant and unexacting in what he surely had kept to himself, and how it had all been done, that a rush of gratitude flooded Matilda's heart and she bowed to him affectionately. She looked back as she passed into the ballroom and thought how thin and pale he looked. Sir John Franklin said very little to her as he took her along, erect and fine, beside the flags. His conversation had become polite and brief. Once he said: "Mr. Daunt tells me he is your husband's oldest friend here. According to Mr. Charles Lamb, the ladies are chary of their husband's friends. Your happy circle seems an exception." She laughed a little, wondering, yet thanking him once again. His chieftain-like eyes seemed a little tired as he bade her a somewhat grave good-night.

CHAPTER VIII

LOVE AND DEATH

THE Captain's house was, perhaps, the highest on the left of the town. It can be seen to-day, reared aloft on stone retaining walls, above the golf-links; while the precipitous road leading up to it, now open to gazers in the Reservoir Valley, was then hidden in wild scrub and trees. Still well above the later born houses, the place lies secluded beneath the impregnable woods of the hills, its walls starred with the crimson blossoms of knotty old geraniums.

On an afternoon, not many days after the ball, a tall man in a pea-coat and small, black, flat-crowned slouch, started to ascend the Pitt's Villa Hill, stopping, however, before he reached the retaining wall across the top. Here, in the shadow of the hanging woods, he gave up his climb, and began to stride about among the logs and bushes by the wayside. He seemed pale with the upward tramp from the town. His face was peaked, small, doubting, and gaunt; and curious brown leather half-boots poked from the broken straps of his black frieze trousers. He had a very small mouth like a button, an immense sharp nose, and watery, uncertain eyes. His movements were stiff—his air even stupid—and he looked about him, his hat somewhat back upon his head, as if he had been born uncertain into this world, and was still far from being confident of his foundation. This dull and temporary air was not only a characteristic of his countenance, but seemed to sit even in the hang of his still aspiring neckwear.

The man, after a little, wandered from the right to the left hand of the road, and here stood with his foot on a recumbent tree, looking dully down into the wood. He was there, singularly quiet, for a matter of twenty minutes, when, a noise of galloping rising from behind the trees, he immediately returned into the road and began to descend. He again stopped, however, as Sir William Heans turned into the road on a bay horse and galloped easily up the hill.

His somewhat fevered eyes were on the man from the first, and not till he was close up under the wall did he rein in, trotting up with spurring heels.

"Captain Stiff, sir," he cried, "you will have to scuttle from

here. The police are awake to some faddle on the way. The good lady, above, wrote yesterday. The fellow Daunt is testing the ground about me—poking into my coming and going. Give me my news, sir. Get down by the wood and in by the beach."

"Why," said the other, his dull eyes yellowing a little, "some servant-woman up there must have turned on you!"

"One of the young women, you think—more possibly a mere nosing into my business. Basset was at the Boundary and saw me as I came through. Some of them want to take away this pass. They may take a gallop along here."

"Hang it, have you been dallying with some young woman, Sir William?"

"'Pon my word," said Heans; "it doesn't always require such strong measures, does it! Come, Captain, I'll spare you two minutes!"

"Well, if they've got a vapour of evidence you've been meeting me," said Stiff, dully, "they'll never take eyes off us. I'll take my hook through the scrub. Mr. Daunt has never stood me since I dealt with Shelk. I don't know how he found out. We landed him with the sealers on Kangaroo Island. Daunt all but spoke to me."

Sir William began to shake his reins.

"Wait a minute," said Stiff. "I've got a piece of good news. Here, I have a provisional receipt for the *Emerald*—yes" (he hastily held up a paper to the rider), "that's all right now, if you've got the £400. She's dirty and not much as to bottom planking, but she'll do the v'ige with a red-leading and a bit of a scrape. She goes for the seal-skins again. That's repeating my last venture with the *Jargonelle*; but Dawson and O'Neil made that reputable. It's a piece grim, my buying her myself."

Heans took the paper. His voice was high and his hand was trembling.

"And Dawson and O'Neil won't move?" he asked.

"No, they won't do it."

"What are they propping at?"

"They've been to look at her. They don't favour with the ship. But she's well enough. She'll do Vansittart Island."

Sir William crushed the document into his waistcoat pocket. "My Heaven, Stiff," groaned he, stretching out a lavender glove and touching the other's shoulder, "so you've done it, have you! Why, it's too good to believe!" (He drew away sharply, staring behind him.) "These great lanky trees!" he said, "I can't believe I shall ever rid my eyes of them! How shall I get those notes to you?" he finally asked. "Ought I to see you after this?"

"No," said Stiff. "I can't come again. Better not risk it all." He looked at Heans' face with a dazed, peculiar, shy look. "Would the lady—Mrs. Shaxton—er—do something for us in that line? Look, sir, I'd be at the turning into Davey Street on

Tuesday after three, and she could drop them out of the fly as she drove down."

Heans glared down the hill again with his hand on his *croupe*. He was white in the face, but calmer.

"Would she do it?" hazarded Stiff, with that dull, peculiar stare.

"Yes, I am sure she would do it," said Heans.

"Well then, I'll wait under the oil-lamp at the corner. You can describe my features," he explained, with a facile naiveté, "and she'll hear me call out 'Stiff'—so—as if I was sneezing. I needn't see you after that for the four weeks. I'll tar her outside, get the red-lead in at once, and pick the boy. When all's ready, I'll go to Fraser's and hang about. Don't speak to me. I'll pass a message to you, somehow. Just give me a nod like a respectable gentleman."

"Well, Captain," said Heans, "it will leave me—so to speak—cleaned out. You must do with the £400, and I must give up my Burgundy. 'Pon my soul, I'd sell my bed and take to 'pink champagne' for a chance of that schooner!" He flushed slowly over the face and temples. "The good woman," he said, thinking possibly of his landlady, "she'll do that much!"

"Name of Quaid, isn't it, 25 — Street?" asked Stiff.

Sir William nodded, looking back and listening.

"Ah, faithful soul!" he sighed, settling his reins. "Thanks, Stiff. I'll get away up—I'll get her—madam—to do that, and," he put his hand again on the other's shoulder, gazing at him sternly, "help a poor devil out of it."

Stiff eyed him darkly, with his dazed, disappointed eye. "I don't know whether to warn you for or against the blessed women," he cried, in a sudden high panic. "In my knowledge, they've saved men, and they've brought men to the roads, for a lark as I see it. Spitfire beldams—beauteous, kindly natures—you can trust this one, ye can nurse that one, ye can pray to the one yonder, ye can take and dub that one in the rivulet and be in your rights. Yes, and this will go over to the enemy of its father, while that'll sit with its mother's son all its life. Oh, mercy upon us, I leave it to you gentlemen, Sir William Heans—to your gentleman's honour and cunning, if that'll tell you!"

The man snatched his hand from Sir William's saddle, and with a cry of warning, sprang away across the road, and down the embankment into the broken logs and wattle of the lower wood. Sir William did not pause to listen, but, to cover Stiff, slashed down his cane and shot his horse to a gallop. In a few terrible jerks he was round in the shelter of the retaining wall.

* * * * *

On this same Wednesday following the Sailors' Ball, Matilda had gone out into the front to gather some white valerian for a child's burial, and was tragically picking among the blowing bushes, when she heard the distant thumping of a horse in the

wood. In some alarm because of the pace, she listened with the valerian in her hand, while it thundered nearer, till—suddenly bellowing into a gallop below the garden—the horseman appeared flashing up along the sea-wall towards the gate. This was near the house-door, and some twenty yards to her right, and through its slats could be seen the grey-green channel flecked with storm-waves. Next instant the rider dismounted between sea and gate, and Sir William Heans came in, with his face much flushed, hurrying behind him his frightened horse. He swiftly latched the gate without looking about him. He then urged his horse along the walk across the house front. The quiet and trembling Matilda he did not see. Pausing beside a hitching-post in some uncertainty, he eventually came to a decision, and continued along the drive to the stables, through the high wooden gate of which he led the animal. He was out again almost as soon as he had entered, but, still blind to Mrs. Shaxton's tearful figure among the flowers, returned at a swift pace to the front. In a few seconds the lowering maid opened the door and let him in.

He had no sooner gone than Mrs. Shaxton ran to the stable gates, pushed the great prison-bolt to, locked the staple and removed the key. Then, still clinging to the flowers, she fluttered after Heans to the front, where she was met by the servant-maid, who held aside the door.

Not five minutes afterwards, a fresh guest appeared behind the sea gate. It was actually Daunt of the foot police himself. He entered in a leisurely way, though his brown cob glistened with sweat; and with a glance of some intentness about the garden, took the animal to the hitching-post. Buckling it securely, he did not approach the door, but strode on as if to stretch his legs, past the stable, the entrance to which he stared at, but did not closely approach. The next instant, he took a running leap at the gate, pulled himself up with splendid and finished agility, and sprang over. A few minutes after, he appeared again on the gate, wiping his hands with his handkerchief, and jumped into the garden. Returning along the drive, he seemed hardly flustered by his exertions, but his alert face was stern as death.

The same maid—a large brown woman with a sinewy step—let him in. She greeted him with a little, hissing, serene smile—a sort of half-angry familiarity—as if she half-expected he would ask her more than the whereabouts of Mrs. Shaxton.

* * * * *

Matilda came into the drawing-room with the valerian, and greeting Sir William, told him of the child for whom she had been picking it. Sir William touched the flowers in her hands with his lavender glove, and, remembering death, was dumb. She looked up at him with her staring eyes.

Presently she went to a table, on which were some vases of cut green, and a buckram shape in the form of an anchor. Here

she sat down and began to cut and plait the leaves. The man—hot and flushed—took a chair, and watched her through his eyeglass.

"You're making new moorings for the little ship?" he said.

"Yes—that's for hope," said Matilda Shaxton.

The channel wind howled up and shook the windows.

"Ah, there's the wind!" said Sir William; "I'm sorry the little child's dead."

"She was like my own," said Matilda, dropping her face a little nearer the flowers. "She would come here in the morning, and I used to tell her what I could of the world—and there—she's not to be troubled!"

"You too—not in love with life!" said Heans. "The dead child has missed nothing—you think?"

"Missed!" said Matilda, reaching slowly among the green. "She might have been beautiful for a little while; used it for good—she was a good little girl—she might have married; yes; might have helped and aided by her patience. Men's and women's patience—it's wonderful. Don't you think" (suddenly staring at him) "it's wonderful!"

"Yes," said Sir William, dropping eyes and head floorward; "somehow the grave shows us where we sit. There are only one or two things."

"We sit here in this room," she said, "a little way behind the child."

"Soon we're gone," agreed Sir William, looking hungrily at her lit hair. "And the room's empty of us."

"Yes—all go," she said chokingly, breathlessly. "She's gone a little sooner. But she knew affection and kindness. She'd seen the beauty of the world. She'd enjoyed and—and helped. There wasn't much she'd missed. I think, with her, love meant help."

"Help!" cried Heans. "But the child might have been loved for her beauty!"

"Oh——" (looking away at the grey window), "she might have loved."

"She might have loved passionately," whispered Sir William Heans. "Would not her silent chamber be the warmer for that?"

"But there's the wind goes by the window, sir," she said, wildly, "crying 'What were they all wearying for; what was it all about? They're gone now—gone—gone, and at peace!'" Suddenly she was weeping as she looked out.

He had risen to his feet. "And here's the silent room," he said, in a shaken whisper, "and yourself gone, and the flowers, and none to treasure your beauty or your kindness——"

A sudden thumping of hoofs came up the passage and Sir William stiffened. Pale Matilda seemed to hold her breath, and suddenly dragged her eyes from the window, and rose. She

stopped, however, as she was sidling past him, shrinking away with a grave face. "I will leave the anchor," she said, in a wraith of a voice, putting it upon the table, "and go from here, Sir William Heans. You speak of my beauty, sir," (in a voice almost baleful) "as if it were of value. I tell you it is the least part of me: a poor, ephemeral summer's garment. Here stand I among my bones—Matilda Shaxton. Am I not your friend? They will bury my bones, like those of the little body here" (she pointed down at the wreath), "and I will still be that."

He turned and would have stayed her—he with his heated, pallid face, shame, shrinking, recklessness of imminent danger, and all—but she had slipped to the door with her dark dress and her fair head.

Sir William went to the window, and putting his foot upon a chair, leant upon his elbow looking out. There was a gleam of sun on the lashing channel and the opposite hills. The trees heaved and the house sang. He was there still—but little calmer—when the door opened and Daunt was shown in by the woman: he dapper and smiling, she white-eyed, with significant mouth- corners.

Daunt's eye dwelt for a second on the cut flowers, and flashed about at Heans, who turned at that moment with a proud face, moved and pale.

"You here, Daunt?" he said, clearing his throat.

"Mrs. Shaxton has just gone away. There is to be a funeral."

"So the maid tells me," said Daunt, somewhat curtly, in spite of his amiable expression. His eyes, as he spoke, passed curiously from Heans's face to his coat, and from his coat to his trousers. "You rode?" he asked. "I did not see your horse in the garden?"

"I put it in the stable out of the plaguey wind," said Heans, sitting down and throwing his head up. "What a place it is for wind!"

Daunt also sat down upon a chair by the table.

"Has Mrs. Shaxton been long gone?" he asked, swiftly.

"Just gone," said Heans. "I must explain. Er—it was a little child—a neighbour's child. Mrs. Shaxton is sad about it."

"Heavens! it must be little Emily Meurice!" said Daunt, with a dark flush. His amiable manner suddenly left him, and he became sharp and bitter. "You can tell me," he hissed, "If the Captain is about to-day?"

"I do not know, sir," said Heans, stiffening.

"What! You don't know!" (He gave his hearty little laugh.) "You haven't quarrelled with him, come now! He'd have been in, if he was at home?"

"I don't think he would have much to gain, sir!" said Sir William, forcing out a jerky laugh. "I tell you what it is"

(with a glaring hauteur, if still laughing), "you do talk damnable rubbish!"

Daunt darted a look at him, "Indeed—indeed!" said he, holding himself calmly. "Indeed, who would quarrel with a man like that! An easy-going, unsuspicious, joking, hospitable gentleman! Heans, you have my sympathy about the neglected prison. I suppose, sir, you hang about here in hopes of your colleague's return?"

"I hang about here!" said Heans. He dropped his glass, and swinging it, said in a hoarse voice: "We must remember where we are!"

"Oh, very well—I merely understood you'd been about here all day. I agree with you, it is a thankless task waiting upon these restless fellows—these witty gentlemen so much in demand!" Daunt had his mouth in his cupped hands, and he was speaking into them as one might into a trumpet.

Sir William suddenly rose to his feet, saying, with a fierce reserve: "Whom have I the honour to discuss with you? Is it our hostess, Captain Shaxton, or myself—a prisoner at a disadvantage with you? This woman has by her kindness—her companionship——"

"This woman!" slashed back the other, with an upward glance. "This is a lady, sir—one whom I have known and revered dearly for these three years—years of honourable friendship and close intercourse."

Each eyed the other in a fierce silence for a moment.

"Mrs. Shaxton has, I say," continued Heans, "made my life bearable here——"

"Yes, and for comfort's sake, she may connect her name with yours—yes—yes——?"

"What!"

"I say, connect her name with yours—your name."

"My name? My——name!"

Sir William stood there daunted for a moment. Suddenly he burst out: "She has made my life more tolerable, I say—a mode of existence, you appear to think, needs the addition of your flippancy and approbation!"

"My flippancy, you singed butterfly!" (Daunt rose with eyes balefully fixed.) "I put it to you, you'd find a flower to trifle with in the Garden of Eden."

Sir William had been standing there, his hand in his velvet waistcoat, and scorn on his pale face. A great relief suddenly overcharged this, and possibly to hide a change he was aware of, he bowed his head with elaborate courtesy, stepping backward. Daunt whipped a glance behind him. Just inside the door, Mrs. Shaxton was standing, with her hand still on the handle. Her long forehead-curls vibrated about a face of tense anger. She pointed her hand at Sir William Heans.

"You are to blame, sir," she said, in a strained, broken voice,

"for" (and her voice suddenly broke altogether) "this behaviour in a house where you know that there is mourning. Stand back, sir—and you, Mr. Daunt, if Sir William Heans can so easily forget a friend's grief, you need not have forgotten the many days of friendship this room has seen—its record of goodwill which you have broken. Ah, Sir William Heans, is this a gambling-house that you should dare to speak as you choose in it? It is my home, to which I made you welcome. Mr. Daunt, you are an old friend here——"

"Always your servant, madam," interrupted Daunt, with his frowning face hung towards her.

"Give it to me, then, with less show of sternness."

"I serve you, madam, with such means as I am allowed; as an old friend I serve you."

"A friend too eager—too eager—too bitter after fault, Mr. Daunt—too ready to punish—too doubting——"

"To a lady so fine-hearted—to an old friend?"

"Have I a fine heart, Mr. Daunt? Thank you—thank you! It's a heart helpful or hating, as its friends choose to make it. This has been a terrible day! Emily dead—ah, threats and anger in the house whose blinds are drawn for her! You had better go—my—my comforting friends—what have you for a bitter woman?" She turned back through the door, her hand still on the handle, yet again confronting them, as though she could not let them go with such sour words. Daunt stood among the chairs between her and Heans, and faced her with head slightly lowered, yet stern eyes lifted, as if he would probe her soul. Heans, glass in hand, with a sort of homage, yet with his pale, handsome face tense and unutterably dignified in its withheld anger, seemed patiently to wait until he might go. Yet the hand which held the eyeglass had dulled it, and the fingers quivered over some regret.

"Go now, please, Mr. Daunt," whispered Matilda, "and please come back again when you can, and we are happier, and help me to forget the anger and dreadful words which have been spoken here." She held out her hand, and he suddenly sprang forward and bent his head over it. He was going out, and Sir William Heans would have passed her without a word, when she touched him—speaking rather appealingly.

"Sir William Heans, here is the key of the yard gate." (Daunt did not turn his head.) "We have locked your horse in. He is restive and the latch is loose. We were frightened that he would break his bridle and get into the garden."

He started, almost snatching the key. "Thank you, thank you," he said gratingly. "I am sorry he has given you this trouble. The confounded wind—it maddens him."

It must have suddenly flashed upon him why she had done it, and why she had just been so hostile to him. Bending away, he gave a blind look into her face, repeating, "Thank you." As

Daunt passed down the four steps to the lower hall, he looked up and saw the tears falling from the woman's proud eyes as she stood against the door.

CHAPTER IX

A P.P.C. CARD

WHAT a poor thing—this woman—at which the ages rail! Pray let us fashion a better and more miraculous gift from God and the spirit; from darkness, gloom, and dust! Empty the world of her airs, and her hair, and her loving, ironic, slightly wearied eye! Take her away, with her music, her wit, her strangeness, her frail body and her pain, her brave little feet walking beside us. Give us—the road without her! What a gimcrack companion for the grim road! Is it Galatea? Is it the dragged figure of Patience, come down from her monument, and defending us with arms meant for loving? Heavens! we scientists could fashion something with a less unexpected voice! What is it? What is it, with its head decked with gew-gaws, its dragging feet, its jewelled voice, its black and silver pearls? Is it a statue from the Pyramids? Is it Peron's *Oura Oura* from the Tasmanian forests? Take away her tragic face, grown thin with love: what does she mean by this for us! Cross those little arms? Away with the fair young head; it's been weeping! How strange! How unfortunate! Heaven and earth, evolve us something different!

When Sir William rode up on Saturday to Pitt's Villa, he found a little party at tea on the terrace. It was a close, breathless day. An unearthly sun flamed in the garden and woods. But the channel and hills were black-blue.

An old Mrs. Testwood; a minister, with a bitter mouth; and a young woman, with long copper-coloured ringlets, addressed as Henrietta, were sitting with Matilda before the windows. Sir William had fastened his horse at the door, and was shown in by the dour maid, who contrived in the short distance between front and drawing-room doors to convey a singular impression of familiarity and faithlessness. Matilda Shaxton, who looked exceedingly sad and pale, received him with a sort of gladness and took him to a chair between her own and that of old Mrs. Testwood. The latter only ceased her rapid, harmonious chatter when Matilda muttered Sir William's name, when, bowing elaborately if languidly, she resumed it without the faintest increase of emphasis. Old Craye, the clergyman, had ducked out of the mist of talk with a

sort of daunted gleam. While the pretty girl with the copper-coloured ringlets pulled her shawl about her with a shrivelling timidity, and did not bow at all.

"Now would Miss Lecale be of use to you?" Mrs. Testwood was asking of the old clergyman. "She treads on everybody's toes, but, her tread being unintentional, leaves no bad impression. She is one of the most uncourtly ladies of my acquaintance, but for some reason the Hobarton world permits her tongue a licence for which it would ostracize another's. She is brave also. Nine years ago, when the Blacks were threatening the country between Hobart and Launceston, she brought all the girls home from school, at Ellenborough Hall, going herself in the fly-coach with the cavalry. Henrietta"—turning with a rustle of fringed shawl to the young woman—"you were one of the distressed Rebeccas!"

"Oh, indeed," said Henrietta, flushing, "I shall never forget the terror of it. Some of the girls had pistols given them. She was just like a man—so brave and collected. The men were very reassuring. The most distressed of them were cracking jokes as they rode beside the carriages."

The whole party was for a moment lost in reverie.

"I have already seen Miss Bullinger Lecale," said the clergyman, in a gentle, acid voice. "She has somewhat lost her faith in subscriptions and indeed in the whole scheme. 'The poor wretched creatures,' she said, 'do not want money or its equivalent. They are dying of home-sickness.' The Bishop, she considers, should petition Government for their removal home."

"Bishop Nixon has been Fidus Achates to the natives," chattered on the old woman, "but he is stricken down with marsh fever. He has been a champion of Flinders Island.¹ But since he has been ill, the Blacks have sunk from people's minds."

"If he be disheartened, what faith may we place in any one man's care of men?" said the clergyman. "Our health fails and our love sours for an instant. In that instant the devil of sternness or indolence is put in charge and some hideous wrong is done. Charity seems to demand machines of health—not men."

"We are weak vessels," smiled the old woman, with her crinkled lavender hands clasping her toy parasol. "Homer nods! Even that devoted 'Father Clark' of Flinders tells me how, one day, when not quite himself, he lost his temper with, and chastised, some women. Afterwards, he said, he went along the shore, trying to forget their piteous appeals. 'They knew that I loved them, ma'am,' he said."

Sir William had become somewhat haggard and pale, as he

¹The place of exile of the Tasmanian Blacks.

sat by Mrs. Shaxton. He pushed his chair a little behind those of the two ladies.

Matilda's eager face was very small, and seemed almost lost in her hair.

"They—the natives," she said, leaning forward, her neck rather sadly drooping, "have to rely on our mercy."

"God has put them in our hands," said Craye, "for some reason."

"How can we deal with home-sickness?" said the old woman.

"We—we could lighten it," said Matilda.

"Indeed—it might be lightened," echoed the rather hoarse voice of Sir William Heans.

"Miss Lecale always said," the sharp old woman muttered on over all obstructions, "that the 'wretches would die out of some gentle ailment', just to aggravate us for calling them savages.' I'm sure, from what I have seen, many of them are gentlefolk. I remember my mother reading to me from the *Post*, fifty-four years ago, when I was a girl of seventeen, how that they had won the hearts of D'Entrecasteaux and his Reign-of-Terror Frenchmen, by holding aside the bushes for them as they guided them into the Island. Was it not civil in them?"

(Sir William Heans had turned to Mrs. Shaxton, and was murmuring under the talk: "Grief in your voice—as I can't forget it—might have kept me away, madam. A grave reason has brought me up—or it seemed grave, before I sat here with these happy people.")

"Is there anything amiss?" asked Matilda, in a kind of crushed way.

"Amiss—oh no!" said Sir William, almost lightly. "Look—what a fantastic sea—what a sad sea—what a grim sea! I have never seen it look so strange. What would you do, Mrs. Shaxton, if you were situated as I am, and some one came and told you you could get out?"

She seemed to touch the tea-cups blindly. But her face was turned away from him. She seemed to ruminate, but he could not see what she did for her ringlets.)

Sly little Henrietta was saying, she did not think it would do to be lost among them, meaning the natives.

Mrs. Testwood answered, that she had been told by old Mrs. Mountgarret herself, how she had strayed as a girl from the Camp, in 1804, and been directed back from the forests by some natives. "It is these little refinements," she continued "these humane doings, more than the terror of their stand, which made us women weep in the streets, when Monpeleata and the blacks of Frenchman's Cap walked in behind Mr. Robertson—eight Januarys ago."

"Ah," nodded the old clergyman, who sat with his back to the sea, "who will forget it, who saw it? I recollect some noble lines by 'Hobartia,' in the *Hobart Town Magazine* :

They came like straggling leaves together blown,
The last memorial of the foliage past. . . ."

("Would you bravely do this?" Heans leant towards Matilda on his plaid knees, and seemed to murmur, as if lost in his subject. "I cannot buy the schooner—*The Emerald*—Mrs. Shaxton. Captain Stiff must do it. My skipper—Captain Stiff—has narrowly escaped prison for some affairs of this kind, and, with heavy suspicion upon him—and these sharp fellows on me—our chance lies in not meeting. For me to be seen again with him is precarious. Fraser's Club, a mutual *rendezvous*, is full of convicts—many of them constables; registered rooms are not for secret meetings. Should he buy a ship, after he has again been seen with me—even if they do not see the money pass between us—I may be watched too closely. I fear I shall hardly trot my nag to Spring Bay."

"Am I to give it—to him?" breathed Matilda.

"Can you?"

"Here—at this house?"

"No—not here," said Heans, with a slight flush. "Some runner fellow may follow him.")

They listened a moment to old Mr. Craye, who was reciting in a fine indignant sing-song: "The wounded were brained; the infant cast into the fire; the musket was driven into the quivering flesh; and the social fire, around which the natives gathered to slumber, became, before morning, their funeral pile——" But Miss Henrietta, who had espoused the side of the Colonists with unexpected fire, returned upon him pluckily with the tale of old Ibbens, who, having his wife and little children killed in his absence from home, followed the Eastern tribe, creeping upon them at dusk with his musket, till he had avenged their deaths.

("There is danger after Mr. Daunt's inquiries?" Matilda said, half heedfully.

"Yes, with a fellow of poor Stiff's fame," nodded Sir William Heans. "We met that day in the wood below your gate. We have been meeting there on my pass. We heard the sound of Daunt's horse and ran for it. Stiff hid in the wood. But for your letter, Daunt would have discovered the Captain and me in conversation. I am not certain whither Daunt's motives may be leading him. He may trace delay, but anything more, he does not! Latterly, Stiff and myself have had no open communication. We have been subtle as the grave. Yet—permit me—though a lady would not lightly be suspected of dropping a purse from her carriage to help an absconder, if a man like Captain Stiff came within touch of the house servants, there might be some after-clap." He presently asked her if she would drop the notes from her carriage.

"From my carriage?" with a slight look of straining. "Do I understand you——?"

"Yes, if you can and will. Time is limited. To be of any service it must be on the afternoon of next Tuesday. I have taken the liberty of writing down directions, and when and where Captain Stiff will wait."

"On Tuesday?"

"Yes—on Tuesday—after three o'clock."

"Someone, who saw him pick it up, might arrest him for stealing it."

"I have explained that. He will run after the carriage with it, if he is seen. He will stand under an oil-lamp half-way up a lane ascending from Macquarie Road. You will face him as you turn into Davey Street.")

"Ah, give them their due, ladies," said the indignant old man. "They were treated shamefully. I was reading only yesterday in a back number of the *Almanac*: 'Let them have enough of red-coats and bullet-fare. For every man they murder, hunt them down and shoot ten of them. That is our specific—try it.' . . ."

"Oh, but Mr. Craye," cried Henrietta; "the little babies they speared! There was the child, brave Dolly Dalrymple, couldn't get through the door into shelter, because of the spear——"

("Presently, if you will permit me, I will get up and go," muttered Sir William Heans. "Where I pass through the drawing-room window, there is a small box on a fringed table. It has a picture in coloured woods. Is it not Tunbridge ware? I will put the money in that—if you will allow me?")

"Pray put it there," she answered, at the same time smiling a little sadly at something Henrietta said. "I must think . . . I think I will help you."

He too laughed; a kind of ironical laugh, for his face had grown pallid.

"How quietly, madam, you said those words!" he murmured. "When I'm a dying man, it will be there."

"The danger—the danger!" she muttered. She had taken up her embroidery again, but her head seemed to tremble as she bent over it.)

"It is a sad fact," said the inexorable Mr. Craye, "that the Blacks killed many of their own little children, during the war, that they might march the quicker."

"Ah, Mr. Craye, there was pain on both sides!" said Matilda, possibly with an eye to Henrietta's heightened colour.

"I have always heard," said old Mrs. Testwood, flowing in on the ebb, "that one of the causes of the estrangement was an incident which happened in the Government Paddock, where many tribes of Blacks, invited in by Governor Sorrell, were manœuvring before the whites. It seems a young native beauty,

who had been much petted, suddenly threw a spear at Captain Hamilton—the aide-de-camp and a man of great dignity—narrowly missing him. When he complained to the Governor, for he was very angry, his Honour—as he was then, you know—sent the whole of the natives away. They retired, brandishing their weapons, furious at the discourtesy which they considered had been done them The native tribes never again accepted an invitation from Government, until, eighteen years after, Mr. Robinson brought in the dreaded enemy. . . .”

“How the voice haunts,” said Sir William Heans quietly.

“Didn’t you know it, sir?” said the bowed woman, sadly.

“No, I did not know it,” he said.

“Whither are you going, Sir William Heans?”

“Oh, we are going—how shall I tell it! Should the schooner be sound—some high-toned Chilian port, Santiago, Valparaiso! If she’s leaky, as we fear, Gun-carriage Island, or the Babel Isles in the Sealer’s Group, there to catch a seal-ship!”

“Did you know someone had spoken to Sir John Franklin about you——?”

“No, I did not. ’Pon my honour, I’m most thankful to them!”

“Stay—you had best consider of it—the life—here—before taking so terrible a risk. It is likely that her Ladyship or Miss Crackcroft will be requiring your services—in the Aborigines Society—or the new Circulating Library. Indeed, your surroundings would be happier——”

“No—no! I’m too old—too old. I’m grown—forgive me—beaten and close. . . . If Heaven will not let me choose—then nothing!”

“Ah—but what shall we do . . . if they——!”

“Don’t say it”—looking downward with a harsh flush. “Say, ‘Friend, go in peace!’”

“Then—then,” she whispered, seeking the table with her fingers, “my hand must help you—Oh, God, pray Heaven, ‘in peace!’”

The young lady with the brown ringlets, named Henrietta, warmly shifting her Indian shawl, was saying that when she was at school at Ellenthorpe Hall, a circular reached Mr. and Mrs. Clark recommending all owners of dwelling-houses to create trap-doors in the ceiling, by which the women might escape to the roof.

Sir William had risen, regretting with a somewhat drawn gallantry, and in a voice a little too excited, that he must interrupt so alarming a reminiscence. “Might he be permitted,” he said, “to give his casting vote to that young lady,” indicating Henrietta. He was certain that his friend in holy-orders stood in a false position—on the trap-door. There was a little reluctant clatter of laughter, and old Mrs. Testwood turned and looked at him out of her feathered poke, her glance strained and fetched from

far, but intent, voluminous, and on the whole charitable. The Reverend Mr. Craye, rising ceremoniously, eyed him with a bitter little gleam; while the girl known as Henrietta blushed a little and smiled, but did not look towards him.

Matilda did not move from her place, but, when she had risen, and he had kissed her hand, she said, quietly and gravely, "Am I to tell my husband the drawing is finished?"

Heans paused an instant, looking down over the terrace and sea as if he would reassure himself. "Pray tell Captain Shaxton," he smiled, "that my drawing is concluded, even to his motto over the main door."

The blue of mountain and sea had darkened, and the sun shone in patches on the descending landscape of the nearer slope like a light at night. Heans left Matilda, straining after him, dark-faced, if standing a little bowed, with her hands clasped upon her heart.

Striding towards the windows of the drawing-room, he stumbled upon the flag-stones, dropping his grey hat as he regained his balance. From within the glass, as he stooped, came subdued male voices. A step nearer and there was the red of a uniform, and Hyde-Saxton's broad, round face. His companion was Garion, of the mounted police.

Shaxton's mouth had a little melancholy drag at one corner, unusual to it, but he began laughing as Heans entered. "Ho-ho!" he said, "it's you, Heans! Here, Garion—Sir William Heans. Where's the drawing? Have you finished the drawing, Sir William?"

"Finished it! Yes, I've finished it," said Heans, a little angrily. He had acknowledged the Lieutenant's somewhat steely obeisance. "When will you see it?"

"Oh, come, you're losing patience with me! You're giving me pepper! Has Matilda got tea there? Yes—I'll come into the office some day next week. Mark that. You must be sick of me. It really is highly civil of you. I'm nothing but a consummate puppy when I get going with those hero fellows. Now—you're a perfect pattern, Heans—aren't you—got all the possible virtues! I suppose you call it frittering away my time! Oh, now—you must have patience—like the woman in the tale—ho-ho!—who asked her husband what she ought to do when the men flattered her: 'Give them time, my dear,' he said; 'it's only a freak of the moment!'"

He laughed, but there was something weak-winged in his bubbling merriment. His chuckle never entirely exorcised the hovering droop. He joked, but half-crossly, and in a subdued way, not quite like himself. There was a tinge of the puzzled pettish in it.

Matilda was heard calling from the terrace, "Wouldn't they join them at some tea?" Sir William, at that instant, said he must go, and bowing ceremoniously to both gentlemen, made

through the chairs towards the door. Captain Shaxton, loudly laughing, ushered his friend through the French-window on to the terrace.

Sir William turned near the door, and crept back, yellow as death, to the red table. He fumbled some papers into the hand that held his hat, and as he drew back the lid of the pretty box and thrust in the papers, he glanced up. The terrace was gleaming with a wild light, and Matilda was receiving the two men with her sad face lit.

CHAPTER X

A PROUD MOMENT

WHEN Heans reached his attic that night, he found Mrs. Quaid waiting, wild and tragical, among the classic furniture. She handed him a letter which she said had been left two hours previous by what she described as "a garringson gentleman in a cloak." "Bad news or good," she said, "I would not let him past the door, especially as he seemed undecided in his purposes. He spoke amiable however. Presently he asked if he might sit a bit 'in Sir William's room,' and I showed him into Mr. Boxley's sitting-room, where I left him staring at the ancient *Almanacs*. At last he summoned me and said he was afraid he could not wait, but left a message that he would be in the Private Secketry's Office at Government House on Monday morning, if Sir William Heans would be pleased to call."

Heans approached the hooded windows with the letter. Mrs. Quaid removed her doubting old face through the doorway. The gusts were huddling past the dormers, and an old prisoner in grey hobbled across the street below, with his head bowed to meet them. A dull evening was closing in. There was a remote noise of hoofs, and a stout man in a caped overcoat, with a singularly rough, sly face and a small chimney-pot on his head, rode down the street, slopping forward in his saddle, and staring about him at the houses with wide, short-sighted eyes. Sir William, as he opened the letter in his hand, saw this fellow twitc h his heavy horse about and come slowly back up the street.

The letter was headed Government House, May 4th, 1840. It said kindly that "Lady Franklin, hearing from Mrs. Hyde-Shaxton that he was a relation of old Miss Gairdener, whom she knew for a famous old blue, wished to know whether Sir William Heans were interested sufficiently in poetry and literature to aid them in the noble task of forming a Circulating Library for the industrial classes. Our humble friends," she went on, "have so little chance of reading the nobler forms of literature, and so few suitable places in which to gratify the pastime, that several gentlemen and ladies have banded together to erect a reading room, and have already prevailed on mutual friends in the Old Country to provide suitable volumes. Half the funds for the building and sixty books are already at our disposal. Lady

Franklin would be glad to know whether Sir William Heans, if proposed and elected, would accept the position of Secretary to the project and Treasurer of the funds. She wishes to be informed at an early date."

A somewhat satirical look passed over Heans' pale face, and, as he stood by the attic window, he let the letter flutter from his hand to the floor. He saw the rough fellow stop in the drab street beneath him and dismount, with his capes flapping about his head. Heans snatched away his eyes. Far down through a vista of roofs the grey water slopped about a black pier.

He dropped an eyeglass from a pallid eye.

Then lifting the pale blue letter, with its lavender writing, from the boards, with his first and middle finger, he seated himself at the chest of drawers which did him for an *escritoire*, and 'nibbing' a quill, began to flourish off an epistle with the graceful elaboration of the beautiful hand of the day.

"Sir William Heans with his duty to Lady Franklin, and begs to reply that he will be pleased to offer his services for the position of Secretary if Her Excellency wishes it and those interested elect him. He thanks Lady Franklin for her kindness, and is prepared to further the project with such address and energy as he possesses." (Gently swinging his eyeglass by its gold chain, Sir William looked away. His fire ducked under a gust and puffed smoke into the room. The fastenings of the blistered windows smacked taut and held. The rafters rattled above his head. His face slowly fell to a deep despair.) "Sir William Heans," he suddenly flourished on, "will be very pleased to wait upon the Society."

Again he stopped, and slowly erased a sentence. He rose, and there was a look in his white, tired eyes almost of panic. His fine face seemed to have crumbled. He drew a deep breath and put his eyeglass carefully back in his eye. Perhaps he thought he was growing too servile under the Hobarton weather—too eager in his attic—too hopeless in his great hope. Or was he possibly lying too well for his erection of a gentleman——?

Hurrying steps creaked on the stairs outside his door, and Mrs. Quaid knocked and put her head in. Her eyes were grim and dark. "A bearded gentleman," she said, "is asking for you, sir. I can't make him out. He says he can offer Sir William Heans a service, if he will see him. But there's something about his face, sir, that I remember seeing. Do you know, sir, I don't think he's——"

"What is this?" said Sir William, with his face but half turned to the stairway.

"Why, sir, I've seen the man in uglier clothes than black—I'm certain about that."

"Is this—tut—tut—is the man a prison-incorrigible?"

"No, sir. But the airs of the person. He's dressed up like a long-coater, but gives himself too many airs."

"Is it one of the policemen——?"

"No, sir, I've seen him once in a prison uniform."

"You've seen him in the prison uniform! Aren't you mistaken?"

"No, sir. It's his short-sight I go by and his legs: a dangerous sort of man."

"That would be some time back?"

"Fifteen years—perhaps. He must have made money. Oho dear!"

"He doesn't know you?"

"No," she said, and cracked out wanly: "he doesn't know me no longer!"

"You had better show him up," said Sir William. "Say 'Sir William Heans will see you.'" (He returned and took his seat with a certain ceremonious abstraction at the chest of drawers, lifting and reperusing the letter of debate.) "This is highly extraordinary," he muttered.

Mrs. Quaid disappeared, and presently there was a sound of heavy breathing on the stairs. A small, stout man in oiled jack-boots and Benjamin overcoat, with a thin growth of black-brown beard about a broad chin, hobbled into the room, his legs bowed as with too much riding. He held a whip and a small chimney-pot before him on his stomach (it was a large, ornate whip, covered with much silver), and looked about with sly, blindish eyes. Detecting Sir William near the escritoire, he stopped, and said in a shrill voice, "I've found you, have I? S'cat, what a world! Aha" (looking about him as he shook his coat from his arm)—"so this is where Sir William Heans—lives."

"Thank you," said Heans, looking up rather testily, "it is. I did not catch the name."

"Oughtry—Charles Oughtry—d—n it, honour, can't I put my hat down?" He went searching about for a chair. He seemed half blind.

Heans came forward, took the curious article, and deposited it with ceremony upon the escritoire. The other unbuttoned his cloak, disclosing a fine, over-long frock-coat, many-buttoned and tight-sleeved. He sat down slowly and somewhat carefully on a dilapidated sofa.

"Gentlefolk—gentlefolk! in such conditions!" he shrilled.

"Well—well! I remember when I would have thought this a penny heaven. But see what uprightness has brought me to. I can sneer at you, Sir William Heans."

"Can you?" said Heans, nodding at his letter. "Well?"

"Well, honour—I know all about you—but you don't know about me. I say that with all the satisfaction of the vengeful devil I am. Ha, what a mess your blood has brought you to—I suppose you say it's your blood!"

Sir William stared at him for a while. "By Heaven," he said,

laughing a little, "you are a rude creature! Have you brought me some better news from the—Penitentiary?"

"Uh, the old scold told you that! A vulgar passionate person—I remember her in mutch and duffle. I see through her. I've a daughter now—but no wife. Look, honour" (with a shrill heave), "I've seen you at Fraser's, and on your pleasure-horse. I know all about you. You're ginned. You haven't got a chance. I've been waiting till you reached low enough for me to offer you a service."

Sir William grunted just audibly. He was rather white and frowned a little.

"A singularly modest nature!" he said. "You're quite certain that it is—the moment?"

"If any one wants, he'd better move soon."

"Even—the man known as Charles Oughtryn—you put it that way?"

"Yes—I want a gentleman for my business."

"Devil take you, fellow!" burst out the other, breathlessly. "Get up! Take your gross figure from this room."

The man rose from the box with a shrill cry.

"No, wait a moment," he cried, stretching out a blind hand, "I'm before my time, perhaps. If you listen to me I'll be respectful. I have a farm at Bagdad, and a fine stone house in Macquarie Street. Money and sneers! I'm here about this child. She's a thin, young child, plain to look at, and it's my whim to see her brought up to ride and that in the company of a gentleman. She won't look at a horse yet, and is clumsy and blind. I want her made to take an interest. Now, need I explain to you, honour, any more what I came here to—to—offer you?"

There was a tense silence for a few moments while Sir William raised his despatch before him and continued to stare upon it. Presently he said with calmness, "No, you need not explain. I do not wish to hear anything further about you or your daughter."

"Trust you!" said the man. "I know you gentlemen. You must have your feelings touched—the girl's as unpleasing as I am; it's no favour I'm asking. It's a sacrifice, dammee! Fancy a man asking that for his young child!"

Heans' face had softened a little. Before him was the letter to the Governor's lady, and he had taken up his pen and dipped it carefully in the ink, as if about to continue it. Indeed, his eye was half-consciously re-reading as the man spoke: "Sir William Heans with his duty to Lady Franklin——"

"They used to call me 'Belial,'" said the convict, "so I call her 'Abelia.'"

Heans began a kind of polite laughing.

"You make me very curious, Mr. Oughtryn," with a sort of merciful irony, "as to the arrangements you may have formed

for the acquiring of a luxury like myself. Forgive me for laughing." (He suddenly bowed his head.) "I have so few jokes. I am at present in great demand. It is rather overwhelming. Let me initiate you into this letter on my desk here. I am asked by a lady, the wife of a high official, to become the organiser of a society charity. I am just now accepting this responsibility. This was gained for me by the efforts of an angelic soul, Mr. Oughtryn, a lady of great beauty and goodness. Had this not been done—and but for a private matter—I am not certain but that I would have accepted the care and instruction of your daughter."

The man's beard trembled and he put up his hand and pulled at the yellow handkerchief which did duty for a neck-cloth. His eyes glared into Heans' face.

"Ah," he cried, with an oath, "it's hopeless, is it? The child must go begging for her gentleman! I'll never get such another chance; you're ginned, for all your great ladies; and she—poor ignorant person—she'll remain the shrinkable chit she is." He rose, and waddling forward to the *escritoire*, took the hat Sir William held towards him. The former rose kindly from his chair, with his quill in his fingers. The other turned and walked towards the door without saying anything. At the door he turned and looked back. "When the notables has done with you," he said, in a small bitter voice, "and you go back to Fraser's, Charles Oughtryn will keep his sneering eyes to himself."

The door banged upon him as if it would thrust him out, and his tread went heavily down. Again the sea-gusts huddled against the dormers. Sir William, with a somewhat ironical smile, returned to his *escritoire*. Even while the man was yet upon the stairs, he took up his letter of reply and slowly tore it into small pieces. He then began an answer in the negative. Presently Mrs. Quaid appeared, her anxious face lit by the soft beams of two home-made candles.

CHAPTER XI

HE MAKES A GOOD-BYE

ONE morning some weeks on, Heans was waked by a loud rapping upon his door. He was instantly conscious of Mrs. Quaid's voice telling him from the stair that the constables had just called and informed her that 2749 (the exalted number of her listener) was to report himself at the guard-room at the jetty-head at ten o'clock. Heans had no word yet of the *Emerald* or his money. He had drunk rather heavily of some cheap wine before retiring (for economical reasons he had resigned his Burgundy), and as he rose and called tragically for his breakfast, his brain surged with fears for Stiff and a wrecking of his hopes. Habit, rather than will, dressed him with leisurely detail. When he had fitted his breeches over his devotedly varnished boots, "mounted" his satin stock, assumed his black-velvet waistcoat, his chains, seals, and wonderful spotless clawhammer; combed his French moustaches, arranged with exquisite neatness his slightly-curved grey hair, he came less shakily up the few steps into his sitting-room. A wan sunlight was on the windows, and his egg, toast, and favourite jelly lay on the precarious table by the chimney. He was about to breakfast, all standing, when Mrs. Quaid appeared with the grey earthenware coffee-pot. Instantly he grew his ceremonious self, and she, from a somewhat agonised entry, stiffened to a grumbling defence.

"The police have gone?" he asked, settling himself in his chair and opening a handkerchief over his trousers.

"Oho yes, they're gone," she sighed out. (She had a trembling stealth about her.) "What have you been doing, fetching the constables to my poor house, Sir William 'Eans?"

"You're certain they have gone?" he said, as he carefully cut his egg.

"There's not a soul in the lane—that I know," she informed him, placing the coffee before the fire and moving covertly here and there. "That's why your egg's hard. Young Bertram's gone up the street. When he comes back he's to whistle—hark, sir!" She put up her trembling hand.

"Whistle if the road's clear?"

"Yes, sir." (She had gone back to the door, and was listening.) "I can't bear them constables coming here, sir. I must speak plain."

Oho dear! I hope there's nothing wrong. No lodgers 'll stop where there's police. I'll lose all my figure—I will. They know where I've been." (She was listening as hardly knowing what she said.) "Mr. Boxley 'ardly sees you, sir, without threatening me under the table-cloth to Mrs. Boxley, though he do copy your honour's cravats and—hark, sir!—waistcoats. There's whistling now, sir. That's my boy Bertram. There's no one about." Her seared old face, as she looked into the room, and her numb lifted hand were grim with gratitude.

Inwardly Sir William was easier. He rearranged his handkerchief upon his knees and began to approach his egg. Possibly he had witnessed the arrest of an absconder. The stubborn inexorability of that operation in no sense resembled this mere visitation—this tainting touch and light evanishment. He was also familiar with the bottomless strategy of the police—their preference for arrest in the open, and pains to accomplish it—yet was calmed by the conviction that neither his own nor his landlady's defences (nor even consideration for the eclectic cravats of Mr. Boxley) invited to any such refinement of method. The face of his prisoner-landlady would alone have confirmed him that he—the plotter Heans—was safe yet with such vague usage.

Mrs. Quaid waited a moment on the second stair, the door at her shoulder.

"Mr. Daunt 'as a room at the jetty," she stated. "He's severe on some of 'em."

"At the jetty—yes—yes—so he has. He's severe, is he?"

"Oho, dear, a fair gentleman, but severe on some. I hope he'll get no down on my house! He's quick to detect good—and kind to improvement, I'll say that. He's been very kind to me. (Yes, Bertram, we 'eard you.) 'You're past the Rubicon, Mrs. Quaid,' he says; 'keep this up, and you've nothing to fear from me.' Oho, dear, it was a great day for me when I saw Mr. Boxley walk out of my door with his high collars. If you could consider Mr. Boxley a bit, sir, and give him a bow now and then? It's not only my respectability I'm serving."

"We will put it down to your conscience, dear Mrs. Quaid."

"Well, sir, I get into such a fright. It's anxiety! If gentlemen come here and make mistakes I can't be blamed—— You're looking pale this morning, sir." This was said with a trace of sympathy.

"In mourning for my Burgundy, madam. I'm better already for your enchanting Mocha."

She stared steadily, yet not quite at him, her ringlets dangling about her scarred ember of a face.

"I'd ha' given up my horse, Sir William, I would," she said, "sooner than take in that stuff of Braxley's."

"Come, Mrs. Quaid, what is your quarrel with old Suffolk? I can't give him up?" (He seemed moved.) "Wait—I shall

want him this morning. Pray, tell Master Bertram to fetch him."

"What time, sir?"

"About ten."

"They said ten."

"Did they indeed . . . well—well, you will give him my order. I will ride from here at ten."

"Ah, them constables . . . I've no right to speak with a gentleman of experience! They never moves, Sir William, I'll warn you, never without intention."

"Why, Mrs. Quaid, I have been fretted abominably by these fellows: pulled up for nothing here, reported for less there. I am acquainted with Mr. Daunt—I know their arrogant, abusive methods. This is my 'circulating library' affair, in which more than likely Mr. Daunt has thrust his altruistic oar. Ha—ha!" (he began to walk rather wickedly)—"our careful Mr. Daunt! Quick to detect anything and kind to improvement—well—well! It would never do, dear Mrs. Quaid, if I improved myself quite out of touch with these constables—now would it?"

"I get in a fright when I think of you, sir," she cried, "so innocent-like among these men." (For the instant her face looked among its ringlets as full of memories as that of an old galley-witch.) "That's Mr. Boxley calling for his shaving-dish! Coming, to your honour's pleasure—coming! Oh, for the love of Heaven, sir, be obedient! That's an officer who's an influential man, sir! I'll never listen to a word against Daunt in this house. I've lived in Hobarton too long not to know my rock and defence, and the good advice and remembering I've 'ad from him. There—that's what he's done for a prison-woman! I'd swear to that gentleman's conscience afore a court of law!"

Sir William rose and irritably shook his kerchief napkin into the fire. He then carefully dusted his shepherd's-plaid legs with it. His face was somewhat sad and angry. "You will not, Mrs. Quaid," he said, "forget about my horse?"

She had pushed the door before her till the little stair was disclosed, and, five steps down, Sir William's bedroom, and the dark tea-scented mouth of the well.

"Your honour, Mr. Boxley's pleasure, sir," she shrilled; then threw her ringlets up with a glare of anger. "Ah, I'll order your horse," she said, in a trembling voice, "and you'll ride down the town with it. I wish you a brave journey—a brave journey—and may God keep the crumbs off your honour's fine pantaloons!"

The door banged behind her, and Sir William, flashing round, put a hand tremblingly towards the logs. Suddenly he swung back to his "escritoire" and seizing a sheet, began a letter with the words, "My dear Stiff," only to pause with a wide eye, and presently pitch it carefully on the fire. With his eyeglass in, he now took his seat again, and ceremoniously opened his *Plutarch*. He began reading at the eighth page of the life of Cato the Censor. "This contrast was found, not only in his manners,

but in his style, which was eloquent, facetious, and familiar, and at the same time grave, nervous, and sententious. Thus Plato tells us, 'The outside of Socrates was that of a satyr and buffoon, but his soul was all virtue; and from within him came such divine and pathetic things as pierced the heart and drew tears from his hearers.'" (Here Sir William heard a slow foot mounting his stairs, looked up, paled, stilled his shaking hands, and read sternly on.) "One day, when the Romans clamoured violently and unreasonably for a distribution of corn, to dissuade them from it, he thus began his address: 'It is a difficult task, my fellow-citizens, to speak to the belly, because it has no ears——'"

There was a summons upon the door, and it was drawn back. A shabby man, with a handsome die-away air, stood in the gloom of the stair. He had little dyed whiskers and a seared top-hat worn awry. Successful—in better heart and better dress—he might have been a sardonic young doctor; now, black clawhammer, strained breeches, boots, and even his harrassed, tragic, petulant, unshaven face, seemed one and all infinitesimally in decay.

He stood in the dark, smiling and swinging his cane, until Sir William, breaking off his reading, gave him a glassy if ceremonious stare.

"Well?" called Heans, in a faint, sharp tone.

"Carnt," said the visitor, with a sort of sharp laugh. "Can I see you?" He was staring in openly and darkly.

"Heavens, come in, Carnt!" said Sir William, struggling slowly up. "How is your Piccadilly influenza?"

"Catching—plaguey catching," said Carnt. (He came up; threw his hat and cane upon a battered ottoman which was producing some promising iron-grey beards, and with his hands on his high hips, stood gazing at Heans.) "Cornered by Mrs. Quaid in the passage," he continued, "who seemed afraid of me—a grim sensation. She is in my catalogue as the angelically rudest woman I beard."

"And you with your lively ladies," said Heans (for Carnt was then clerk to the women's prison at the Cascades), "should have experience. I suppose, sir, you get soured?"

"I do," said Carnt. "Yet the lowest of them flaunts one high moment in her face if you could but tap it."

"Why, Jarvis," cried Heans, with a light laugh, "still digging after marsh-lights in that miasma!"

"Jack-o'-lanterns!" laughed Mr. Carnt.

"Light-o'-loves," laughed Sir William Heans, and then turned deadly pale.

Carnt was silent, swinging a little.

"Bromley was at the prison last night," he began, "toggled up for some state dinner. I was hauled out of the office into the gateway, and questioned as to my goings to and fro. I was asked when I had last seen S——, then Henry Six, then Weighton, Starkey, Dalgleish, and you." (He stared for a moment rather

sheepishly at the other.) "They wanted to know whom you played with, and whether I was one. I said I had seen you playing with Six and, I thought, Starkey, but not with Weighton or Captain Stiff. I told them you were rather a duffer at cards, but were very careful whom you played with after I pinked Rudstone. I said, moreover, that I seldom played with you because your play bored me——"

"Rather untruthful of you," said Sir William, greyly testy, "seeing that I beat you against the cards three consecutive nights in Six's shop."

"Pooh—pooh—'a game of chance in the nursery,' as old Rudstone says when they catch him cheating. Moreover—d—n it!—you had all the aces! They know me better than you do. I think I was believed, a peculiar sensation from Bromley. Careful as he was to hide it, I gathered Daunt has a secret contempt for you—a golden asset I did not corrode with heroics; though not clever, that man has a sort of feminine intuition. How have you deceived him?"

"Heavens, the feminine intuition is not always right!" said Sir William, rising and dropping out his glass with a puff of relief. "The fellow is a hazing booby. I am, believe me, favoured with a visit from constables this morning. My presence is required at the quay office at ten o'clock. (Oh, don't be alarmed—yes, they're gone, sir!) Through Shaxton, and his generous lady, I am offered a secretaryship among the literary people which I have refused. I am—hang it!—possibly to be inquired into for that!"

"Singular!" said Carnt. (His thin lips were twisted in his high-coloured face, and he seemed inclined to shadow some sardonic morality at the other through a startled look.) "Deuced singular! But stoopid—heavenly stoopid! Heave the anchor! All hands to the sails! Ah—and all your friends—and the lady, Mrs. Shaxton—with what a romantic interest you will remember the old prison station, Heans!"

Sir William Heans grew haggard as he stood eyeing the speaker. Carnt slowly dropped his eyes, and began to draw from the tight sleeve of his coat a small uneven packet, which he handed to Heans with a somewhat sour irony. Sir William took the enclosure in a short wild way, with a face half ecstatic, half touched with amazement and confusion. Perhaps the smell of tar upon it had reached his nostrils with a hint of open sea.

Carnt turned away to the window, swinging with wide eyes and hands on hips. "There was another row," said he, "last night at Fraser's. Silk and Goddesden fought like cats over a story about Silk's murder case. Stiff moved up while the row was on, and passed this into my hand with the debt of a quid owing. He said, 'Pass that in to Sir William. He'll give you five pounds for that.' Singular way he talks. We then had some words about the woman dropping the money from her fly——"

"Did he—was he so little of a gentleman——?"

"As to mention names—yes, he was! Stiff is too talkative. I think you're a fool to trust a man with such a little mouth."

"Faithful," mumbled Sir William, terribly moved.

Carnt, in his light way, swore before G—d he was lucky.

They were silent for a while. Carnt seemed to grow harassed and tragic as he looked through the little windows over the brick walls and black shingle roofs to the dipping green waves, on which a tarred skiff with a long stack and great paddles was heaving her way slowly across from the Point. Her whistle went dimly. There was a far-off noise as of heavy logs falling on iron: an organ note. He went to the window and put his hand upon it. Presently he spoke from there. "Pray give me my money and let me be off," said he.

"Certainly," said Sir William, "I have it here—I would it were fifty. One moment—don't go yet—let us see what he says."

He reached for the comb in the *Plutarch*, and slit the package. Unfolding this with a slight increase of colour, he eyed the few words: "Money to hand. Secured boys. *Emerald* near dry. Launch next Saturday. Sail on Wednesday morning, August 22nd. Hang off Spring Bay on Thursday, where boat will wait near mouth of creek after dusk."

"Listen, Carnt——" he began hoarsely.

Carnt flashed round, "Stop," he said. "D—n you, I mustn't hear it! I can't listen to you!"

The other looked at him with a flash of grey amazement in his face.

"I am still a prisoner here," said Carnt, with maddened dignity.

"You knew I was dangerous."

"And a d—n fine fellow, Carnt," Heans said gravely; "ah, I'm grateful to you, sir; this is for my friends to hear!" But he dropped his head, for he remembered once having seen this sentimental, worldly brother under the transformation of wine, eloquent, convincing—an accomplished cheat—giving away a friend's soul-secrets in a malignant rattle of treachery.

"The poison of asps was under the lips" of poor Carnt when he had been drinking.

He moved slowly round, and pulling open his writing drawer, took from a pigeon-hole a green netted purse, in which were some fifteen sovereigns. From this, screening the action with his person, he worked out ten coins upon the desk lid. Then sweeping them into the drawer, he rose and advanced towards Carnt.

"Accept this purse," he said, "it is valueless, but done with devoted fingers."

Carnt held it up, dangling it cynically in the window light.

"Feminine, I suppose!" said he.

"You refer to the women with some bitterness, Mr. Carnt!"

"Oh, I haven't your method for referring to them lightly!"

Sir William turned away. "No," he said.

"I would to G—d you could leave me your remainder in

another of them!" Sir William was grey as ashes. Carnt was still in the window. "D—d if you couldn't take your wide free skies, and me these bonds with her."

"And, how would you have won her?" asked Sir William quietly.

"I'd obtain a promise from her to drop a purse to a drunken skipper—and all the rest of it. Then when I went to say 'farewell,' I'd——"

"What?" in a somewhat broken voice.

Carnt was looking at the dipping green water and the life-empty hills of a thousand trees.

"G—d—I'd go," he said, hoarsely; "yes, I'd cut myself of man and place! I'd fall, like you, and be my petty master. I'd leave the lady—and the others—leave 'em to bleach, blast 'em, and never think of them again!"

He turned with his sardonic face sad and dark, and put the purse carefully into the lapel of his breeches.

"You speak hardly, sir," said Heans.

"Away with you," said the other; "away with you, Sir William, like Flora in her car. But, by Heaven, don't get grabbed! Possibly you wouldn't bleach so prettily as me."

"Let us end it, then, in this familiar strain," said Sir William, acidly.

"Let us enumerate our pleasures together," hoarsed Carnt, throwing his body up.

"Why should that word touch me?" cried Sir William.

"Heaven knows—excuse me! I'm in love with some of the women!" said the other; and both were silent.

Drip—drip—drip! a rainy mist had begun to patter from the gables on the sills of the little windows. Carnt had been swinging in the centre of the room, his hands in his lapels, his gay head down. Suddenly he threw it up and laughed gently. "Ha-ha-ha!" And he began to walk, a trace ruefully, towards the stair.

"Why, Carnt," said Sir William, from his desk, "I shall go a sad man for life, with these words upon us, Carnt. I'm getting freedom, but losing people I desire to speak with, in life—the irony of it. The little world won't give them back—no. And I—I am not such a God-forsaken egotist I can speak words of anger and go out—anything but shamed and cut to the heart. From my own, I know how cruel and bitter is the life I'm leaving—made bitter by small men and our pride—eh, our pride. I wish I had the strength—I'd be better no doubt—to wait it out with you."

Carnt turned near the door, laughing gently.

"You wouldn't," he said, shaking his head. "You mistake me. I have business—cards—wine—dominoes—totem—and 'lively ladies of the Cask-Hades,' ever new, changeable as an April day. What more will you have in Dieppe? I'm even

something of a poet, Sir William, and can find considerable pleasure in our 'exquisite surroundings.' It is so large to us English—eh! Yet under the mountains there's many a little hill and trickling water. Now, now, here's a hand—indifferent clean, Sir William! Stiff keeping his button shut, you'll get now out of it, thank Heaven!"

He strolled back and the two men locked hands. Carnt turned, strolled out of the door, and went humming down the dark stair.

Now, the reader may be interested to read how curiously the irony of Fate played with the relations of these two men.

CHAPTER XII

NEARING THE END

SIR WILLIAM, in a graceful variant of that over-clawhammer known as a spencer, and a tall straight-brimmed hat, arrived in a drizzle at the pier-head. To the right, running out of sight along the stone shore-wall, was a line of massive brick buildings, closely alike, many-windowed, low and shingle-roofed. At a door in the blind wall of the nearest—over which hung an oil lamp—stood a triangular sentry-box, and by it a soldier, with a waterproof covering on his shako (from which his long neck-hair dragged in the wet) and a cape half-covering the white bandoliers and double breast of his coat. On the glass of the lamp were the printed letters: "Sub-inspector." To his left, and behind him, rose an abrupt knoll of small-dwelling streets. There were few people about. A squad of constables in clawhammers and leather top-hats (and carrying short, heavy guns) tramped sullenly up into the town. Two stiff-lined old men clad in frock-coats, very high-waisted and full-shouldered, walked across with their hands stuck in their breasts and their old precise heads nodding together. A few carts, with names of river stations upon them, were drawing or drawn up at a bar behind the offices watched by convicts in grey, with black straw hats, and grim mouths cropped of hair. Over the water to the left, piles were being driven to support a new pier, and an army of prisoners-for-life, in yellow uniforms, with flaps of their leather caps drawn down over their ears, were raising, by a pulley, on wooden shears, a great mass of iron, which fell every few minutes on the iron-capped pile with varying notes.

The *Erebus* lay against the side of the pier, a red-coat pacing her quarter-deck, her masts moving solitary against the hills. Nearer the shore-end, two ship's officers and a gentleman in a short soldier's cloak stood waiting above a boat which swung a little on the waves, its whiskered, black-hatted crew sitting with vertical oars. Some ships were lying out, pulling heavily at their chains, while, splashing the water like a lame duck, one heavy steamboat with a machicolated funnel was paddling slowly into the channel, while another, with a tarred body, was dwindling slowly out of the opposite trees.

As Heans dismounted on the wet flags, a gipsy-like convict,

incongruously devil-may-care with his felt jacket and shaven face, approached, brilliantly smiling, and made proffers for his horse. The man professed to admire the animal: qualifying his praise, however, with the wager that "the beautiful gentleman's honourable legs had straddled a neater barrel." Behind his volatile flattery, he was significantly, if half-sneeringly hostile: a form of approach familiar to Heans from the prisoners. It was as if the convict—unable to help forcing the fact that he knew him, as did many in the town—would have given this man his championing as a fellow-prisoner, and one, moreover, who carried it off so cleverly, could he only have resisted the chance Heans' situation gave him of making one of the "swell-mob" feel his position. The temptation seemed tragically irresistible.

Pale Sir William, who had gained in confidence after his unmolested ride, tossed the man his bridle, asking his name with an admirable kindness. The man's eyes returned him a black look, answering abruptly:

"Jack Marback."

"Indeed—well, Jack, keep him walking," he directed, "while I take my honourable legs into yonder door. I shall be gone but a few minutes."

"The Honourable John Franklin himself has just arrived," said the man, with a covert enthusiasm, as he took the horse. "He went in that very door like a hadmiral. There's the gig there, with the jacks in her, holding up their oars to dry 'em."

"They'll wet their brave laps," said Sir William, as he hopped off.

The door of the office was now open, and in it stood a colossal constable in a top-hat, muttering and flipping his fingers at Heans. Sir William was engaged in avoiding the puddles between the flags. The sentry was grinning from his box. Heans glanced a polite glass at the warder as the latter said, vibrant with cold anger, "Late, No. 2749. Pass in—pass in!"

"Ah—ah!" said Heans; "most sorry, most sorry."

The door gave on a great bare hall, the size of the entire front of the building. It was full of waiting police with guns: some like him at the door; others with black blouses, belted, and heavy peaked caps strapped about their whiskered cheeks; others yet, in the grey uniform of the prisoner, with muskets and single shoulder-belts, the latter divided into two compartments, or canvass bottles, with nozzles hanging in finger-reach on right hip. Sir William, as he strode through them at the order and beckoning of a second constable of a horse-power integrity, endeavoured to forget the smiles and slights—the herding of dissipated, wondering-eyed men—the lining up—the silencing—in that very room on the day of landing.

A Heep-like man who was taking down names at a table at a far window ostentatiously leant back in his chair and contemplated the new-comer with the tips of his long fingers

touching. Further down the room, two officers, in full uniform, stood in the channel windows, talking with their cloaks on their arms. As Heans was led towards a great stair in the wall at the right end, one of these gentlemen turned and put his hand to his cocked hat. It was Daunt. But he did not come forward—the other did not turn his head. Sir William's glass whipped out as he ascended the boards of the deadly shoe-beaten stair. With him this was evidence of a brain very heavily taxed.

"Some inspection?" he inquired, as he turned the corner and ascended towards two great doors that opened against the walls.

"Inspection—country-wards," smacked that brisk and weary self-sufficient in a steam-power voice somewhat restrained.

"I did not see His Excellency?"

"H'Excellency in the ward-room." He pointed up.

"By whose orders am I here?"

"Order last night through Government Offices for No. 2078, No. 160, No. 2749, No. 270, and No. 1350 to attend guard-room before ten. No. 160 and 2078 prompt to time—now attending His Excellency in ward-room. No. 2749 late. Message from Excellency wishing Sir William Heans to honour him with attendance on arrival."

A stern old man at the stair-head called out: "Pass up—pass up." He was all covert keenness and discipline, like a knife in a sheath. It was as if he had drawn himself just so much as to give a glint of the steel.

Sir William put up his eyeglass as he came into the upper room. "How d——d unkind!" he muttered, apropos of some inward thought. Near the door stood a little group of civilian gentlemen: one of which—a stout, little, short-necked man with whiskers and a tortoise-shell glass—glinted up at Heans and then quickly away. They were at the moment silent. None spoke. The room was long, bare, and narrow, with two windows on the street. A line of seven policemen, claw-hammered, white-breeched, and top-hatted, armed with cutlasses and guns, stood at attention by a closed door in a wooden wall across the upper end; behind them a corporal's guard of red-coats. Two young constables held a prisoner in yellow in the first window. His face had been made grim by cropped hair and shaven lip, but his eyes were wild, angry, heroic, nothing-contenting, entirely-unappeasable eyes of those unfortunates of life born without the seventh sense of values. At Heans' entrance, this man pulled his guards round towards the window, with a deep, hysterical protest. They permitted him to stay in that position.

"Ruddy's got Port Arthur, I see, sir," said Heans' conductor to an old, fine man, very hook-nosed and high-stocked, in white breeches and police buttons.

"Ah," said the other, "Ruddy says 'he'll get himself hung!'"

The speaker strode over to the door in the partition, knocked

upon it, and presently entered and closed it. A shy murmur—three quarters rattle, one quarter boom—had been filtering through the wood. Again the door opened, and a sergeant in a red coat with a white breast came out followed by two soldiers. Behind them lurched out two chained prisoners in black and yellow: one a giant figure of a man, with a covert, cunning countenance; the other a little, gay old fellow, with a keen malignant face, and the erect athletic body of a child—indeed, it was difficult to judge if he were old or a mere boy. They were marched away to the window, and after them came a couple of constables. Reached there, the sergeant in a loud voice halted them, and began to look about him, pulling at his whiskers; his eyes then falling tentatively on Heans' guide, he shouldered his weapon and made over to him.

Sir William could not prevent himself from looking exceedingly pale. Many apprehensions must have occurred to him, as, some way inward from the gentlemen at the door, he stood looking through his glass about him; one immaculate, plaid leg a little in advance of the other on the coarse boards; his cane swinging gently from his canary fingers. On the one side he saw the chained "second-sentencer" condemned to Port Arthur; on the other, the little band of gentlemen; in the midst, himself, a convict, summoned seemingly on a matter of "literature." While a certain benevolence of acceptance, since he had passed into the upper room, might have assured him of safety—nay, even of support—yet there was something in the manner in which he had been summoned to the Governor's presence, in company with a man sentenced to Port Arthur, which may well have sent a shudder of apprehension through him. Again, all this display of ordered force: what an unkind turn of fate which had thrown into it a secret absconder! "How d——d unkind," he said, as he rose into the room. Last, Daunt's show of friendliness! What did the forgiveness of a man like Daunt mean? He might well have asked: "Did Daunt credit him with the weakness of being confused by compliment? Was Daunt at the old game of stripping a foe's heart of armour for the next man's sword to play upon? Had Daunt, at sight of him forcing his way through that sea of police, been startled into one of his half-friendly moments? Or, more likely, had the man's mistrust been allayed by the sight of his (Heans') reply to Lady Franklin?"

(Devil or philanthropist, which was Daunt?)

The sergeant approached Heans. "His Excellency will receive 2749," he said in a loud voice. Sir William stepped forward, and followed the man across the room to the partition door. There, while they waited an answer to their knock, he examined, with some curiosity, the side-arms of the sardonic line of police.

The Government Surgeon, a brisk, white-whiskered gentleman

opened the door, and the sergeant, stepping aside, sharply beckoned Heans to enter. The old, fine man in the top-hat and police buttons, made way for Sir William as he came in, and departed with the doctor, who shut the door behind them. The small room was barish, with a window hung with heavy red curtains looking on the street. A dark, athletic-looking man, in a captain's uniform, was sitting back against a table, with his fine hairy hands resting on the edge. The sensitive lips gave the bald head and bull-dog face a half-sardonic air, belied somewhat by the quick and saddened concern of the wide bold eyes. There was no one else in the room.

It was an age of stiff and laudable pedantry; when Adolphus and Achilles were christian names of the vulgar; when man, in a fine endeavour to ornament his speech, to elevate his person, to "exalt his Maker," often dropped to mere, cold precisionism—even hypocrisy; when common women read Scott, and spread his poems by the heart. We can afford to laugh—we who, in our own time, with our wild equalizing of human temperaments, are threatened with a drab end of formlessness! Franklin was one of these men, his precisionist air softened by a great and feeling heart; his religious, Dominie-Sampson face in strange contrast to the free, athletic grace of his person; the whole softened by that slightly sardonic, sensitive, danger-tautened mouth. These were lips, whose love of man was such that they were incapable of forming the word "beast."

Sir William remained just inside the door. He had removed his hat and stood fiddling at the buttons of his black spencer, somewhat constrained, his grey head bent. Franklin sat there a full minute, staring at him; then he said, softly and quickly, "Do me the honour to listen to me, Sir William Heans. I want to beg you to earnestly—to earnestly" (his voice was hoarse and he cleared it) "reconsider your position. A lady has interceded with me for you—a gentlewoman—and I am inclined to grant her request. You have had some visible token of what—with help from you and God's help—we may endeavour to bring about. Your refusal was a formal one. Tell me—is it your actual wish to" (hoarsely)—"to refuse to make this effort?"

Sir William took his eyeglass out, and fingering it a little pedantically, looked gravely into the street, where the carters stood staring up under their black hats.

"It was my regret, sir," he said, pushing forth his words one by one, "it was my regret to answer the letter received in the negative. I could wish to accept the position perhaps, had I the power to—the power to keep my patience." He flushed slowly as he fingered his glass and stared out of the window.

"I think—courage is all that is necessary," said Sir John, with a compunction almost familiar in his voice, "courage and forbearance. . . . Wait! perhaps you had better think a little before you decide. I, at least, have felt it my duty to tell you so."

"I cannot think so," said Sir William Heans, after a little.

The Governor was now very moved, and spoke quickly in his hoarse, quiet voice.

"Sir William Heans, I have seen men in the North-West sink to degradation and death under too adverse circumstances. The slow degradation of a gentleman is a torturing sight, for his very pride and heroism. I have seen a man's hands tied to prevent him injuring himself, and yet he would crawl about on his knees sooner than trouble a weaker brother with his wants. I have seen pride and I know its value, and how trivial is the worth of life when it is gone, but I do not care—like that good young lady, your friend, and I cannot stand—if an effort can prevent it—that we shall have to think of you with utter ruin upon you. This is a stern place; man's inconstant heart cannot manage man without iron laws. If once you stoop beneath a certain level, we are powerless; the law is written in iron that will deal with you. When the ship's loose of her anchor she must sail or drift. They tell me, Sir William Heans, you stand in a serious risk of drifting—aye, drifting deeper and deeper into the pack, till your sails rag on the mast. These are men who think they know my charge better than me."

The Governor's daunted face; the firm, small, trembling mouth; the feeling, danger-deadened, care-nothing eyes, waited on the prisoner's—it seemed almost world-indifferent—for an answer.

Heans stood looking out of the window, but he said nothing.

"You will not move your proud foot thus far," said the Governor, "in pursuit of an honoured life!"

"Your Excellency said 'honoured life,'" said Heans, dropping his glass, with a wild, little bow. "Is there such a thing? And will you find it, sir—great traveller as you are—for a convict in this town? I put little value on existence. My dignity and honour none of your laws can touch. If I lose them, I shall cry out to no one. When they are gone, the more vulgar officials can use no more worse methods against me than have been used hitherto. Do not fear for me, kind sir. I am grown too old and grim" (with a bow) "with the grey side of difficulty to play with the young ladies. The worth of a man's life—what is it? I pray you credit me with a certain happiness in my own way of it."

The Governor had risen, and was looking at him, one arm akimbo on the lace of his clawhammer, the other fingering the hilt-tassel of his grounded sword. Utter dismay, sadly withheld, was in his face. He spoke after a little—at first with difficulty. "Possibly I do not value life, sir," he said, "any more than do you. But I believe in an honoured life, or a life deserving of it. We have to fight for our very sacrifices in this world. Not only that, but, when sacrificed, they may be written down as errors. That is what many a prisoner here runs foul of. He thinks his quarrel is against man. It is Life he is in engagement with. It is of Life he is asking justice. And Life often reserves its

justice. . . ." (He stopped suddenly, as though conscious that his feelings had bolted with him.) "You talk of honour. Hush!" he went on, deeply moved; "I will give you my idea of it in a man. It is that he should not wound his friends by his falling. If a man have bravery and not compunction, he is no gentleman. What to him becomes mere life, must be to his friends a perpetual tragedy. If you must go your own way, Sir William Heans, see that you wound as little as need be that gentle woman who has tended you in your distress—by some unthinking bravery."

Something of the sternness of Heans' position was echoed in Franklin's face. He stood looking at the other with a sort of mute invitation. Sir William Heans took up his glass, as he stood staring out (at the grey-clad prisoners in their black hats, at the wet town, and vastly above, the splendid frown of Old Storm Mountain, from whose forested bosom had come the shingles of the snuggling roofs), and put it carefully in his eye. Then he turned and bowed quickly and gravely.

Franklin swung round to the table, and, fingering for a second among some papers, lifted his hand towards a brass touch-bell. "I am waiting for your word to ring, sir," he said.

Sir William Heans said, after a moment's hesitation, "Pray be good enough to ring, your Excellency."

The bell clanged, and the door opened. The doctor entered, and saluting the Governor with a bright inquiry, stood quietly upon one side. The sergeant put his *kepi* round the door and nodded. Through the opening, the chimney-pots of the line of police bobbed oddly, as the men lowered bronzed or pallid faces.

Heans made a bow, which the Governor answered with a nod jerked sadly out of his high cravat. Then Sir William went again into the outer room, across which he followed the sergeant, not to the window where the other convicts were standing with their warders, but towards the incurious gentlemen at the stair-head (old Mr. Magruder, the magistrate; Mr. Duterreau, the famous artist of the Blacks; Dr. Jeanerret, the new Governor of Flinders Island; the volatile Mr. O'Crone, the travelling *savant*, a small, handsome, fair-whiskered, excited, intellectual personage, young, if rather old-fashioned as to costume, with a stoop, a shirt-frill (of all things!) and tasselled Wellingtons, just arrived in his pleasure yacht, the *Quenosabia*, from England, and very interested in prison-life; Major Leete, of the Women's Prison, stiff, handsome, grey, but somewhat falling to pieces; the famous Mr. Robinson, short, red-haired, wearing trousers without straps and a balloon crowned travelling cap, whose freckled face, so peculiarly gentle and commanding, had faced, with incredible courage, tribe after tribe of murdering Blacks, and, unarmed, brought in 450 in one year to lay down their arms in Hobarton; dangerous Mr. Montague, the Colonial Secretary, deep in conversation with old Mr. Gellibrande, the attorney)—through these

incurious gentlemen at the outer door went Sir William, down those abominable stairs into the thronged hall, where Daunt, in animated conversation with his brother-officer, looked up, laughing very heartily, till his eye touched Heans, when it lost something of its jollity.

The Heep-like man at the table again relinquished his work, leaned back, and stared rigidly at Heans as he passed across the room. The door was crowded, and the sergeant had to push a path through surly shoulders. A prisoner was being brought in. He was a little, grey-bearded man, dreadfully quick-glancing and amiable, but deadly pale. His irons and his black and yellow dress were covered with wet sand. The constables were carrying him in with a kind of cynical compunction.

Heans passed close beside them, and reached the door as pale as he. Had the man's pride-stripped face troubled him?

Outside, the sun was shining on the wet flags, and the place echoed with the "splash—splash" of the paddle-skiff rounding into the pier. Sir William Heans paused beside the sentry and beckoned for his horse, which was brought up at a sort of prancing run.

Along the shining pier, the officers, above the swinging boat, watched him rise upon his horse.

"Has the beautiful gentleman caught a wiggling?" asked the carter, peering up at him as he buttoned his spencer and straightened his hat.

"I should think I had," said Sir William. "Here's your shilling, Jack Marback."

"Lag's luck to your honour! I'll wet it with a mug of bull."¹

Heans smacked his whip down suddenly, and caracoled off towards the rise, his graceful tails slapping the back of his saddle.

¹ Spirit.

CHAPTER XIII

SHAXTON NUDGES DAUNT

ON the 19th there was a banquet to the officers of the bomb-ships at "Hodgson's celebrated Macquarie Hotel," and Captain Hyde-Shaxton and Daunt, of the foot police, found themselves only divided at the table by Lieutenant Cooke, a mutual acquaintance. A rich globe-trotter and *savant*, Homely O'Crone, who sat on Shaxton's right, claimed much of the Captain's attention during luncheon, more especially as the former did not seem to be in good odour with the Colonial officials about him—neither with old Magruder, the police magistrate, who was grumbling his food in on his right, nor yet with Daunt, who twice ignored his approaches. This gentleman enveloped Shaxton in an excited discussion on navigation, in a rapid, cultivated voice. In the muddle of it, Shaxton laughed—agreeable—jolly—if, for instants at a time, lost and abstracted. He would lean over his plate chuckling as he related some anecdote of his *Beagle* voyage, but his gaze would float away sometimes as though he heard "voices in the wind."

Duty took Cooke away before the speeches, and Shaxton, with a lack of ceremony which would have been brutal if it had not been somehow a part of his Bedouin nature, forsook his excitable friend, and slid talking into Cooke's seat. He seemed, though once he chuckled out a tale, mentally to lean on Daunt. He tittered gloomily.

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Daunt, frowning about him with wide eyes and neat air. "Was she taken ill suddenly?"

"It seemed to me sudden enough," said the other. "She had a sort of fainting-fit. Dr. Wardshaw won't say anything. We couldn't get her out of it. She'd had people calling about the young girl's death, you see. Heans was there. I thought him bad-tempered. He may have been losing his temper with the women."

"Creating a scene—destroying the harmony, and that, you mean?" Daunt leant forward half-smiling, half-indignant. His hand was clenched on the tablecloth.

"Ho-ho-ho—indiscreet, poor beggar! The women were purring on his raw side possibly. But if that's it—he mustn't

go up there when I'm away any more. Matilda feels for him. She's far too delicate for these tragic situations."

Daunt was staring stern and concerned at his plate. The other gave a little look at his face.

"Of course your wife told you," Daunt said, at last, very deliberately, "about my tiff with Heans in your drawing-room?"

"No," said the other, chuckling, but turning white. "What's this? Quarrel?"

"Surely you've forgotten, Shaxton?" speaking very quietly.

"She must have said something about it?"

"No," said Shaxton, "I never heard of it."

"Well, it was nothing," said Daunt, briskly. "I'm afraid I lost my temper with the man for being there. His—I can't say it delicately enough—the idea of his gross behaviour—and all that, in connection with that pure bower makes me mad whenever I meet him there. I hated—forgive me, Shaxton—I hated to see your wife even look at him. I must remind you I'm a constable, and am not touched by the good appearance of a prisoner. I felt she wasn't discreet enough with him. See them as I saw them together. Finding him there, sitting like a full dog among my old friend's embroideries and flowers—and his languid greeting of the privileged guest—of 'Oh Daunt—so it's you, is it?'—I say this drove me mad that afternoon, and for a moment I—I lost control of my feelings. I said he was there for no good. I beg your pardon. Indeed I beg your pardon, Shaxton. Your wife interrupted us. At the sight of her face, with signs of tears (she had been mourning her friend), I admit I was very much ashamed of my show of feeling."

At this moment, old Magruder's growling voice rose in answer to some rattling of O'Crone: "You should take your pleasure-boat round to Port Macquarie, sir. There is some clever prison-building there. The scenery's wind-blown and harsh for those fond of it, and empty of human sadness, as you know—abandoned."

"My skipper is frightened of your Hell's Gates," said O'Crone, stooping a little, with his fingers in his beard. "Once in, and I and my schooner might stay among those abandoned prisons for life." He turned suddenly to Shaxton. "Forgive me, Captain Shaxton," he said, "but did I hear you mention a name, 'Sir William Heans?' I am acquainted with a certain Miss Gairdener, a relation of this prisoner, and knew him a little before his conviction. Indeed, I thought I saw him at the police muster. Has he passed down out of all communication?"

Shaxton puffed out his pale cheeks, and stirred himself in a frowning way.

"Oh, he's all serene," he said. "You can meet him if you like—I can get him up to tea at my house, if you want to meet him." He gave Daunt a nudge with his left arm. Now, Daunt was a strange man to nudge.

"Can I—can I?" nodded O'Crone, with keen interest. "Well, I must say I'd like to see the man. Thank you—wouldn't it be putting Mrs. Shaxton in a curious position?"

"A curious position! Oh, bother it, no!" chuckled Shaxton. "We see a lot of Heans. She had a letter from your Miss Gairdener about him."

"Indeed—indeed!" said the other, stooping over and feeling the table with his hand in a somewhat harassed manner. On his little finger there was a peculiar black ring with red hair in it. His nature seemed to be that either of an untactful intellectual, or one to whom life had allowed a peculiar and, perhaps, just egoism.

"I'll tell you what," said Shaxton, with a hospitality half-bright, half-wounded; "Mrs. Shaxton's in ill health. Dr. Wardshaw orders a change to my place on the Tier. It's a grand drive. When you've lionized the Factory, you come up for the day with a party. Daunt, you'll bring Mr. O'Crone up. We'll get Cooke. Perhaps Captain Crozier would come. And Daunt" (with a drooping of the lips), "you could get Sir William Heans a pass out. I said I'd show him the place, and he'd meet somebody he'd known,"

Daunt poured himself out a glass of wine. His face was meditatively knitted, but he gave a little worried nod towards O'Crone. It seemed like acquiescence.

"Indeed, very happy!" said O'Crone. "It might be as well, Mr. Daunt, not to mention names. If he is the man he used to be, he might refuse to meet me."

"Ah, I suppose he would come, if he was told directly?" asked Shaxton, looking palely round at Daunt; "he's a proud man."

"Do you wish him particularly to come?" said Daunt.

"Yes, I do," scrambled out Hyde-Shaxton, who looked suddenly almost drawn.

"I may say—I am not so prejudiced in this man's favour, Mr. O'Crone," said Daunt. "He is one of a class which—as Sir John Franklin puts it—has no sense of compunction. Superior in manner, of course, but, still, to me, one of that class of men."

"Ah, Mr. Daunt," cried O'Crone, in his rattling, cultivated way, "you police are too prosaic! This is a man who was condemned on a woman's code. In men's eyes he committed a capital-crime in the meshes of a net of intrigue and allurements. He was a man, by repute, peculiarly sought after by women."

NB.—The abduction case of Sir William Heans and the Lady Charlotte S—t hardly needs retelling even at this date: so world-wide was the story and so much discussed and questioned the actions of both. They used to say of the beauty, as they said of Mary Stuart, that "only one man ever encountered her and came away uninfluenced." Sir William Heans wanted to run away with her to the Continent. The high status and celebrated

attractions of both people; the fact that the beauty was a married woman; and their names being so often connected (indeed too often) in society and in public, spread the sensation widely throughout England and over the Channel. We will not detail the story. Sir William and the lady, having arranged to coach together to a house-party in the country (not a novel excursion to the pair), they met at the mail office, where Heans handed her to the wrong coach for which he had obtained both fares. The lady must have been more innocent than her reputation if she had not suspected he had purposely made this mistake, but were she innocent, or a species of coquette, his sin remains indelible. The "mistake" was not discovered till late afternoon, and when discovered they alighted at a certain village where a hack-chaise was procured, and they posted across a county with the object of catching a late coach on the other route. The lady does not seem to have shown alarm at the escapade until dark fell and the roads became difficult, when the outrider, who was in Heans' pay, overheard an angry altercation in the carriage. The sympathies of this man had from the first been with the beauty, and they were not much allayed when, on his confessing he could not make his way, she haughtily demurred to their turning into a neighbouring property owned by a friend of the Baronet—then absent. She was persuaded at last to drive to the door of the mansion, which for a long while she could not be persuaded to enter. When, loudly protesting, she at length did so, Sir William—much out of countenance—led her to an upper drawing-room, and locked the door upon them both. An outcry was shortly heard, and the postillion, having aroused the feelings of the servants, they demanded the door should be opened, and when this was not done—maddened at the continued screams—two of them entered by a ladder through the window, when the furious woman sought their protection. Thus the story. It is a fair comment on the case that the lady was in after life again in the Courts.

"Ah, sir," returned Daunt, in a somewhat ironical tone, "you, with your pleasure-yacht and your musical-glasses, have leisure for these intricacies. I give you my word of honour as a gentleman, women are given as the excuse for their downfall by every four convicts out of seven! We police have come to regard it as a particular sign. Experience brings us to that decision. We are interested to hear it in so far as it tells us the kind of man we are facing."

"Upon my soul, sir," said O'Crone, with signs of anger, "you're a trifle stern, sir! You make me damn glad, sir, I'm not a prisoner in one of your prisons!"

He said this in such a significant way, and his heat was so sudden and evident, that Magruder and others bent over the table to see who it was.

"Oh, yes," said Shaxton, chuckling out wildly. "That's Daunt—all over. Too stern—too severe! Now, Daunt—ho-ho!—have him up! Mr. O'Crone is interested! Matilda, too, will be glad to—"

"You shall have the prisoner, Shaxton," said the Superintendent, who, unusually for him, had lost control of himself, and seemed to speak for O'Crone's admonishing; "he shall come up to Flat Top Tier if I have to send a message by him to the District Constable at Jerusalem!"

"Pon my soul, you're good, Daunt! Thanks—thanks. Who's this speaking? Why, there's Jeanerret up!"

A tall florid man was speaking, now with wit, now with a sort of bitter indignation. He was using impassioned gesticulations and such phrases as "Let a man put his hand to his heart and say" and "an arrearage of justice." He seemed to be appealing for the exiled Blacks of Flinders Island, and said they "were dying like bears."¹

¹ The small tailless opossum, which, when captured, refuses to eat, and mopes and dies.

CHAPTER XIV

HEANS'S TICKET-OF-LEAVE

POLICE NO.

POLICE OFFICE



HOBART
RICHMOND TOWN,

21st August, 1840.

The Bearer. WILLIAM HEANS, a Prisoner holding a Ticket of Leave, has permission to pass this day to the house of Captain Shaxton at Flat Top Tier, and return on or before ten p.m. of the 22nd day of August, to this office.

To whom it may concern.

JAS. MANWOOD.

N.B.—This Pass is to be taken on the Day the Bearer arrives in the District to Mr. Chief district Constable of Richmond, who will write his Name and date on which it is exhibited to him hereon, and enter the Pass in his Book. The Pass is to be returned to the Police Office at Hobart Town by the Bearer; and should he have occasion to return before this Pass is out, he must leave it at the Police Office on the Day he arrives at Hobart Town, and should he be unable to leave Hobart Town the day this Pass is dated, he is immediately to return it to this Office.

It was a still, oppressive night, and very cold. Sir William had with difficulty settled himself to his *Plutarch* and his tobacco-pipe. The ragged, amber room, if outwardly the same, from being a permanent place of residence to which the chilled mind had endeavoured to yield itself, had become a dangerous and precarious lodging for three days—a restless place of harassment—a mutter with a half-a-dozen chiding ghosts. One of them more than muttered; it moaned incessantly, like the old clock of the poet, "Never—forever"; it had a bitter, beautiful image; it wept. Liberty! What was liberty? It was life! What was

life? A little while! Oh, fair young head! Oh, kind heart! Oh, lost affection! Oh, voice with your: "Didn't you know it, sir?" Yes.

He thrust his book and pipe on the rheumatically table, and took a stroll to the cold windows. Over the wet shingles, he could see a ship's light moving on the frosty water. A cart jingled across the top of the street, with a tilt and some rolling oxen. Heans looked a wild relief as he turned and strolled back, but, near the fire, the samplers drew him over:—

The world's a stage; and players know full well
That they must part when rings the caller's bell.
Yea, they must part and mourn their faithful loves;
The cote is silent; sundered all the doves.

There he stood, Sir William Heans; his irksome and tainting bars all crumbling about him; now excited and oppressed by the dark pall of danger; now exalted and cheered by the warm clasp of liberty, stayed yet—pained yet—by something of which a heaviness in his heart told him he would never again touch the like. His heavy-lidded eyes saddened as he stood. How curious! Had the dagger of her beauty gone so deep in the earth of his being? Was it bemoaning so great a bereavement? Crying after a woman: frail creature of ephemeral moods? Could earth weep for earth, grieve for earth? Could earth find an agony in good things spoken, in help given, in the things of simple intercourse? Be still, inward moan! Frail human cry—for the good of her—be still! He cherished a vision of Matilda Shaxton, with her eyes strained, and her brows drawn, beautiful, serious, eager, with that indefinable warring in her—that look of Galatea, elevated by life. "Heaven deal with me, if ever I trouble her!" he said, and went to the windows with his hands over his face.

For something like an hour he walked up and down the garret, past and past the ragged chairs, his handsome face pinched and small. At last he sat down, lit his pipe, and took his *Plutarch*. He elevated the latter towards the candle in a short-sighted way, and his expression seemed aged and pedantic. Slowly and with great pains he began to read aloud from the Life of Cato, the Censor: "He adds . . . that he never gave more for a slave than fifteen hundred *drachmas*, as not requiring in his servants delicate shapes and fine faces, but strength and ability to labour, that they might be fit to be employed in his stable, about his cattle, or such-like business; and these he thought proper to sell again when they grew old, that he might have no useless persons to maintain. In a word, he thought nothing cheap that was superfluous; that what a man has no need of is dear even at a penny. . . ." He was so concentrated in his book that he did not hear his landlady's knock, nor her rather heavy entrance

as she came in, clasping a large blue haversack, and a letter. She looked perfectly calm, but her eyes were significant and mistrusting. She said nothing till she reached the *escritoire*, when something whistled from her lips, as she put down the haversack. At the word "Soldiers" Heans dropped his book with a great clatter, she observing him with a flash of terror.

"Upon my word, madam," he jumped, "I didn't hear you!"

"No—it was Corporal Hares came," covered she. "Did you think it was police?"

"Aha, that sycophantic fellow! He has left these, has he? Was the man rude to you?"

"Oh no, sir! Not rude. People know better in my house."

"You look frightened yourself!"

"Oho dear, I've a clean hand whatever happens! Registered rooms is registered rooms! But it's a worry with lodgers! You gets your constitution touched!"

"Ah, poor human conscience, madam!" (as he took the letter), "how it discredits our discreetest precautions!"

"I know you, if I don't know your talk, sir. But I'm anxious for my own, and the boy there; a woman can't do more. And my own's the lodgers, while they're in my house, and behaves theirselves. I gets taken up with them I'm working for, and feels uncomfortable-like if calamity threatens. 'Respectable's' my motto, and a 'good name's' my policy. But if my trial comes, I can't trust myself. Mr. Daunt, he says, 'You're not hard-hearted enough, Mrs. Quaid. Keep shell-fish,' he says, 'and you'll keep a reputation.' Ah, I'd do anything for Mr. Daunt—I say that where none can hear. Yes, in spite of feeling for all, I leaves 'em to their own keep, and holds my counsel. So I'm a sad woman."

"What—never rejoice with your lodgers, Mrs. Quaid!"

"Well, as I was apologizing for my vapours, Mr. Daunt said, 'Never mind looking down in the mouth, Mrs. Quaid. It's a sure sign of health in a prisoner.'"

"Well—you've one, here, sad enough, madam!"

"Now I see you, sir, you're looking sadder—I hope for good!" And she began to hobble out through the chairs, looking however as she did when she came in.

Sir William rose suddenly, with his eyes in his letter, and felt with his hand, as if for support, along the whitewashed chimney. "Heaven help us," he hissed out, wildly, "all's against me!" His face grew livid and then flushed dark. With a swift oath he turned and snatched up the haversack, weighing it in his hand by the straps. He then drew it close to his eyes and examined the fastenings, both of which were sealed.

The old woman stopped in the doorway with a stern and tragic air, as if she would have uttered some word of sympathy—before she stepped down and let it fall.

The letter was headed :

POLICE OFFICE, HOBART TOWN.

August 21st. 1840.

To William Heans, Ship, *Juliana*.

SIR,

Captain Shaxton has asked me to convey to you, as arranged previous, a request for the honour of your company, with that of several ladies and gentlemen, to meet Captain Crosier of the *Terror*, at his estate, at Flat-Top Tier, near Jerusalem, on Wednesday, the 23rd. inst. The Police Office encloses, herewith, haversack of papers, to be carried by you on that date to the District Constable at Richmond. With said packet is Ticket-of-leave, permitting you to pass with same, and break journey at the cottage of Captain Shaxton.

I have the honour to remain,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. GATES, Chief Dist. Const.

To-morrow !

Heans swayed over to the cold windows. He saw again the ship's light, and followed it with his eyes, as it pitched slowly out into the dark.

CHAPTER XV

SHAXTON FORGETS THE CANISTER

"Bingo is shy. We must give him a little line."

St. Roman's Well.

OH very fine and grey, Sir William entered the large central room at Flat Top Tier! There must have been over forty guests. The morning had been clear and frosty: the day was sunny. Many of the men stood in their cord gaiters, and a few even of the women wore their riding-habits and male waistcoats of satin. Some lounged on the veranda—high over a plunge of forests; others simpered within over their tea, or Tokay, their spirited eyes laughing unseeingly through the four double casements of amber-coloured cedar, shipped by Shaxton from Singapore.

Sir William in a pair of exquisite duck breeches, with white leather straps, a high-shouldered clawhammer, and a "pudding cravat" of blue satin, held his grey hat and cane by the door. A few women placed pale eyes on him; a few looked coldly; a few stared evilly. How shocking is evil in a woman! The men—benevolent, courtly, diplomatic, grizzled, grave, jocose—treated the appearance of the newcomer after their several ways: some—of those that knew him—simulating surprise; others concealing discomfort; one or two speaking suddenly to him, as they passed, of the weather, this or that.

His eyeglassed eye passed slowly round. Daunt was not present—yes—there on the veranda edge in his Wellington grey—hatless, efficient, and rather wan—with a proud top-hatted young lady. Where was—no—no—no—pretty women, but no Matilda Shaxton! Just outside one of the windows, stood the Captain, his jolly, pale face half towards Heans, with a fine old lady in a poke and sable shawl. With them was a little man in a peaked tasselled cap, with a tight face and whiskers. That man was Crozier. Sir William saw and possibly envied the dapper, little gentleman. We see one doomed to achieve a series of singular heroisms—a burial of Sir John Franklin—a last letter from that starving army in the snow—an agonizing spectre-march through sleet—tracked—shadowed—swallowed—by half-told Fate.

Here and there were grim heads, poised like decapitated John the Baptists, on chargers of satin cravat, and offered up to some

epicure Herodias in a wreathing of social smiles, which Heans had seen in situations less gentle. The transmigration, if convincing, did not seem to reassure the absconder, whose eyes, if indifferent, had a chilled look when resting on them. By the chimney, however, to the right of the cedar mantelpiece, there was a figure which had a much stranger effect on him. It was that of a small, aquiline-faced man, somewhat archaically dressed, with a white cravat loosely knotted up in a bow, showing a small frill, in wellingtons with tassels. He held a grey chimney-pot and a little tasselled rattan, and stood alone, rather shouldered out of a group of which he made one and yet did not make one. His eyes—his restless eyes—were on Sir William in a wild concentration, when the latter's, catching upon them, blazed to a grey dismay. Instantly—and very sharply—the other depressed significant brows, and a faint amazement flushed in on the pallor of Sir William's stately face.

At that moment someone touched his arm, and looking down out of his astonishment, he found Matilda, very haggard and unlike herself, passing out with the Colonial Chaplain in gaiters. She stopped and welcomed him; that old hero, who had reformed the wilder elements of old Hobart, bowing beside her. Matilda looked feverish and tremulous, and her forehead was shrunken in its fair ringlets. Her strained eyes, softening on him as he stood bowing, were steadfast, if not quite guiltless of fear. How proudly, how conventionally, in what pain of precarious change, with what burden of doubt and risk—did these two meet—for the snapping of their erring love. Matilda would have been better had she valued less the attachment of such a man. Sir William would have been better had he loved the woman just so little more that he could have seen no reason to regret leaving her.

"You have not been well!" said Sir William, with a slight hoarseness of sympathy. "I hope, madam, your health is better?"

"Thank you, sir. Have you met your friend, Sir William?"

He laughed a little. "Do you mean Mr. Daunt? I have seen him."

"Yes, Mr. Daunt is here——" (She let her eyes wheel quickly round.)

"There is Mr. Daunt on the veranda. See, he is looking at us!"

"Yes. He is looking fine. I hardly recognised him." 01 10

"Indeed, he is looking wonderful—But I mean Mr. O'Crone. He has come specially up in the hope of seeing you, [Sir] William Heans."

"Mr. O'Crone—I don't know Mr. O'Crone."

"It is an English traveller who says he has met you: a Mr. Homely O'Crone: a very learned little man."

"Would you be kind enough to point him out?"

"Mr. O'Crone," said old Mr. Bedford, "is standing alone to the left of the mantelpiece."

There is an alarm of movement, chuckling, and chatter, and Shaxton comes pushing through towards them. His moustaches fall in a good-humoured, hospitable grin, but he looks restless and out of place. "Matilda," called he, "they are starting for the Waterfall. Ah! Heans! You've got up. Good of you. I asked Cooke and Garion if they'd seen you behind. Our party made a regular troop. Sheriff Fereday said it brought to mind the Black String days. Lacy told him he wasn't swell enough in his old cabbage-tree for The Line.¹ 'Pon my word, sir,' says he, 'you look more like a Five Pounds Catcher.'² Ho—ho—ho!"

"Ah," grinned the old Chaplain, "Lacy was one of the *Elegant Extracts*.³ He was pitching into the Sheriff, who was chaffing the Battery Guard."

"We're all King's Own 'to-day," chuckled Shaxton. "You're very late, Heans! Matilda, you'll look after your cousin! See that he gets some of that Indian sherry. Bedford, they're asking for you! Come along! Sir William Heans, you'll look after my wife. No, she's not to come. She's been unwell. Hang it, yes—very! Don't let her take you down the garden! Too restless—too restless!"

Matilda had moved aside to whisper to the young lady named Henrietta, whose copper-coloured ringlets were tucked away under her ears in imitation of pretty Queen Victoria. Old Mr. Bedford lumbered obediently towards the windows, and Shaxton butted after him, rousing this group and that with hospitable bursts of humour. Preoccupied group after group rose and stirred. People were departing on the veranda.

Natty Daunt of the foot-police, looking as depressed as if he'd been getting a wiggling, gallanted out with an active old lady in gigot sleeves and buckles. As they talked their way by, he darted up a bow at Sir William, saying with a flash of surprise, "Why, Sir William Heans! What a giant you are, sir! A foot taller, 'pon my soul!"

In the general movement for the windows, "Sir William—Sir William Heans," muttered a rapid, rattling voice, and Heans, drawing white eyes from Daunt's back, found beside him the solitary gentleman from the mantelpiece. The proud, agitated, aquiline face, with now a narrow, Jewish glare, and now a gleam of wonderful goodness, gave a strange impression of one not quite

¹ The Line (or 'Black String') of 3000 soldiers, settlers, police, and prisoners stretched in 1830 about Central Tasmania and the East Coast, in an attempt to corner the murderous tribes in Tasman's Peninsula.

² Men who made a profession of catching the blacks at £5 a head.

³ Nickname given to the 2nd (and Beaux) Division of the Town Guard, instituted for the protection of Hobart during the "Line."

⁴ Nickname, 1st Division.

honest, aspiring after moral good. "I remember you, Sir William Heans," he said, "if you have forgotten me."

Heans was staring at him now with a courteous intentness.

"Ah, I remember you—your face—well sir," he said, bowing twice, and speaking as with a great effort.

"Do you come with us up the valley?" asked the other, looking towards the windows where the people were departing. "The ladies and gentlemen are carrying tea and bushman cakes to the Waterfalls—quite à la *champetre*!"

"'Pon my word, I hardly know! I am, I think, to take some refreshment here."

"You are late arrived! May I make the remark that as you entered you struck me as looking very fatigued? Your health keeps well, I hope?"

"My health! It's well—I was delayed over some despatches for the police."

"I am to have the honour of gallanting my Lady Grumpus up the valley. I should be happy to have had a few words with you."

"You honour me, indeed—sir," said Heans.

He was standing with white legs apart and hands behind back; and he looked away through the windows, his eyeglass up and a very faint smile on a sallow face somewhat wildly sad in the eye. The room was near emptied, though a few people still darkened the windows and veranda.

"Ha," cried O'Crone, clutching up his cane, "Captain Shaxton calls me! I must go! Sir William, I shall discover from Shaxton where I may call on you. All the way to the Waterfall, Sir William, as I stumble over your mountainous trees, and thread your twenty-foot ferns, I shall be discussing the musical glasses, and endeavouring honestly to explain my presence in Hobarton. *The Almanac*, it seems, has been vague about me. Ah, sir, these funny human worms! They do not believe in nature—poetry! They cannot—will not—believe a sane being capable of keeping a yacht full of idle sailors from a love of nature!"

He seemed sensible of the agony in Sir William's pale, proud, preoccupied, yet would-be attentive face. Sir William, on his part, seemed to have discovered a hidden agony in what he said.

"Could you not persuade the lady," said the latter, somewhat balefully, "to abate her curiosity over a poetical lingering, with which she cannot sympathise?"

"No. Let me reply in the words of Miss Fanny Burney: 'Her character, and the violence of her disposition, intimidate me from making the attempt; she is too ignorant for instruction, too obstinate for entreaty, and too weak for reason.' God forgive me, talking so of the women! This lady will ask me, grim enough, if I grow tired of Hobarton——" (Suddenly he dropped his voice). "What should I say, Sir William Heans, if I wished to confuse her?"

"Hardly a possible contingency, sir," answered the other, with

a slight hoarseness; "and one more tragic than I looked for as I rode up through those clear valleys" (he waved outward with his glass), "that you, so distinguished and high-hearted, as I remember you, should find a vital necessity for confusing any impudent woman!"

O'Crone stared steadily at him.

"And are you then so unchanged, sir!" he said, half-ironically. "Has adversity left your spirit unimpaired? Indeed, how little can the world change us! It has no respect for difficulty; but with a gentleman's heart it can do little. Hush, here's a lady approaching! (In a hearty voice) "I hope I find you of a calm mind, Sir William; with plenty of optimism. Congenial male companionship; the more kind sex, indeed, as your Aunt Miss Gairdener would say, not being accountable—ha-ha——! I hope I find you happier than—than we all might be?"

"You put calamity as the chance of all," said Sir William, quietly. "Strange indeed, sir, if you had come upon it!" His voice trembled—either at some pleasanter recollection of his little acquaintance, or from the nearer presence of Mrs. Shaxton, who passed at the instant through the door.

"Now, now, sir," laughed the other, "do I look like one struggling in a web of affliction!" (A voice shouted "Mr. Homely O'Crone" from the emptying veranda. He made to go off, waving his hat; but as suddenly returned.) "Look! I laugh, do I not, quite nicely! I discuss with acumen! I am courteous with the ladies! I sing—I am in good voice at the forte-piano. And yet, you, who hardly know me, hint that I am harassed." He stared at him suddenly, with great sadness, in the face.

"Egad, sir," said Heans, "it was your name that stung me!"

O'Crone—the last but Heans in the room—turned and went to the windows, a curious figure with his nervous and agitated face, his bent shoulders, and his tasselled boots. As he put on his hat in the veranda, he was greeted by an impatient summons. At the same instant Shaxton's voice called: "Mr. Daunt, will you bring a rug for the ladies!" O'Crone vanished past the windows with a nervous step. But for Sir William, the large room with its chairs littered with shawls, cloaks, pelisses, surtouts, paletots, and pea-jackets, was now empty. He stood for a few minutes where O'Crone had left him, his eyes looking across the room into the lit upland of forests.

Matilda Shaxton came quickly in with tears in her eyes, and said—though she could barely speak—"I'll say good-bye now, sir. I think—I believe this is the last time I shall see you."

He was pale also. He took from her the decanter and sandwiches she carried, and put them on a table. Then he said, "May a fellow have—those hands?"

She gave her hands to him, staring. Tears pressed out and dropped. She was not graceful in her love—no, she seemed an

awkward woman. Neither was Heans his fine, grey self. He dropped on his knee, and put them against his forehead.

"Ah, friend, friend," he said, "this is for life! Am I to yield up this? I'm a worldly fellow. No, madam, I am not a man to believe in love! What's this—what's this that begs God not to take you from me? What is it that would speak with you? that would not lose your face? My God," he said, "I think there's faithful love!"

"Oh, yes . . . very faithful, sir."

"I go to-morrow. The schooner is now off Spring Bay."

"To-morrow—how dreadful!"

"Would you tell me—not to go?"

Her whole figure shivered. "Why, I shall lose you, sir,"

"Well . . . I'm going . . ." He raised his head, and his eyes stared on hers. "There's just one thing. Look away," he cried, "those staring eyes won't let me speak."

"Nay, Sir William. I'll not look away." She did not move her trembling hands.

"How true they are! How brave! How proud! . . for whom are they sorrowful?"

"Why—when a friend goes——?"

"Turn them away, Matilda . . . This is the crying of a man's soul—I tell you—as he rides up those deep valleys. See, the sun leaves them! What a grey return!"

They both stared out in silence.

The faces of both were haggard and sad.

"As I came up, my escape to-morrow seemed a romance. With the schooner gone, and all my risk an afternoon's canter a few miles beyond my pass—I began to long for happiness—because freedom seemed so simple. Your guests passed me on the road, and I thought of them returning in the dusk to Hobart Town. I reflected that you would be returning with them, and that I might ride behind the coach, and see your face and—a stranger—hear you speak . . ."

The faces of both were haggard and sad.

"Then my heart cried, 'My God, I can't lose her!' If there is anything true in human love, she will come with me in the *Emerald*! If she knows anything of this agony of broken affection—this bitter sense of things snapped and finished—this longing for a face that—for all you had of it—might be vanished—torn away like a scrip—in death——"

"Ah—sir!"

He stopped.

"Good-bye, Sir William Heans," she said. "Death—and, they say, a better re-uniting—nay, even a kinder affection—are not so far from us all . . . No—no—no, the other is not for me—no—nor you."

He stared up and cried out: "Ah, you'll not come with me?"

She glared down . . . and he let her hands go, and groaning

turned away. She was gone from the room when he rose to his feet. Stooping, very old, he walked over to the left of the French-windows, emerging presently on the veranda. Standing there, his nostrils were assailed by a strong odour of bruised rosemary.

* * * * *

Three minutes previous, a man had been sitting in the veranda on a low chair by this window. That he might shelter himself from the wind, he had sought guard behind the backs of some armchairs, and the view over that end of the veranda was hidden from him. Over to the left, however, he could observe Nature at her wildest; unimpeded by aught but a few English hollyhocks.

At first he sits far back, and very erect. Afterwards he leans a little forward. His hair is dark and neat. He wears a high-waisted, grey-frock-coat, a white cravat, and his cord trousers are stretched over wellingtons. There are flat surfaces in his face, which make it slightly too solid for his costume; for though thin to refinement, it is thickly boned, and gives promise, at some future day, of a heavy, aldermanic weight.

His expression is at first so stern that it seems—as he sits there—as if it is set in bands of black iron. Perhaps his very stillness increases its sullen energy. It is one of those faces which look as though they have been hardened with human hands, or like some species of rock have become indurated with exposure. Though a latent and almost malignant self-sufficiency invites opposition, you are forewarned it is already world-petrified.

He is not long in this resolution of mind. The demeanour of our doomsman gives way to something tragic, dark, and moved. Stay—has the brass armour of the punisher crumpled a little before some deeper reality—has the riveted ceremonial of justice backed aghast before unexpected pleas! Ho for our code dealing with the shocks of human contact—our police-book on the human heart—our learned inken precedent touching these documents in blood. Our justicer has some troublesome affection of the bowels, which still a tone too high can irritate—a breath too quick can inconveniently disturb. He would grace the bench better with a still tougher stomach.

See—he seeks to recall himself—to look his stern conviction. Nay, he cannot. Nay, a jaundiced judge. See him as he leans on his chair-arm, with his hand on his chin; a sharp, keen-edged efficient, yet momentarily at throat-grapples with frenzy. Order conquers! His small, delicate hand flings away. A dark stain is on his determined face. He springs more erect. See him, the reliable, the patient hearer, the man of feeling power—his mind is settled. He is right with himself. O just judge! It is the pillar of order, the hearth-protector, the experienced in violence, wickedness and bounce, with whom the sacrificing of social “growths” is duty. He must work—stern

orderer—even if his ears be assailed with sadness. Ah, the fortitude! It is a Daniel come to judgment, with arms custom-bound! See him push in, e'en though he have no stomach for it.

Hush! It is a kindly day! How prettily the near hollyhocks shine out against the mountains. The orderer's stony eyes look out upon these harmonies of Art and Nature. How far is he from seeing them! He draws from his pocket a revolving-pistol, and fixes the paper of caps under the hammer! This is ready on his left knee. Half out of his breast comes an iron gyve.

Tragic—dark—moved! Bah! a fine business if your Honour cannot go through with it better! A more even air—pray. A less mercurial countenance. For very dignity, condemn! Scorn them, justice! Silence in this court! See, where his Honour crouches forward. He is about to admonish—nay, to cry us a mercy—nay, to grant time—nay, to cry "Death." Grim execratory, if you must condemn, condemn less implacably. If pardon, come not so hardly at an admitting—finger not at credence with so cynical a touch. O drab judge—O shaken Judge—O dark, dispirited orderer, what tone unthought of, what inhuman plea has shivered those tense bands, and frenzied those hard eyes with hope unwelcome!

Pallid sentencer, what tickle of compunction stills thee! Stern man of order, what delays the march of proved, smooth precedent. Haste, dark efficient—haste, honest hand of retribution—veteran hound of the state—hungry fang for right! To your feet, reluctant minister! Oh, strange! Crouch not there half-risen—hands clenched to strike—eyes glazed outward on the sun-blessed gullies! Action—action! Strike, bloody lash! Snake whose venom is for right, dart in your stinged tooth and anguish out another good! Press in your stiletto, right's assassin! What hinders thee! Tried punisher, what tickle of compunction still delays thee! Ah, yellow Hamlet—what do you among the headsman!

Hold! There is yet another doomsman upon the bench to-day! No judge, this; yet one singularly interested in the case. Is he one of those onlookers, who half in sympathy, half curiosity, attend these tragic functions—one of those strange beings who, with their feet in the quicksands, find a pleasure in contemplating the sinking of others? Is he there by some accident of eminence on a holiday; or for some selfish or some malicious interest? There he listens.

With the grate of the new-comer's footsteps, Daunt shrinks back. It is as well for his Honour's privacy that he has taken shelter from the breeze. For as the other lowers a basket to the veranda, he glances along among the cloak-hung chairs. Is he so certain of its emptiness? He does not give it another

glance. Some thought or sound stops him in the very act, for he remains turned inward, his head down, and the basket-handle-tense in his hand.

The new-comer's breeches and waistcoat incline to the mode, and like his broadcloth coat—so tight of sleeve and waist—seem over-nicely fitted for the stoutish face. On his head is a hat of rice-straw, cocked forward. His face is broad and sad. Who is it? Bah, what a pothor over some old police magistrate or clipper-commodore! Some joking ancient (say you) and pet of the young ladies—some retired notable, with wit undaunted if legs surrendering. He seeks quietness. His soul—like his jocular face—has become grave. He would rest, and look at life grimly. We cannot all be joking with the children. . . .

Nay, he is restless! He turns away, and swings back again! Has he got a fright or something! Bah! no peace in the quicksands, even for your detached student of 'em! Yet what in Nature could be so fascinating and yet so aging! He turns purple, then white! God Almighty—the poor gossip's mouth hangs like a dead man's! Ah, listening Tom—listening Tom—here's treasure-trove of a fearful kind—here's grave gossip—here's a common crying in the court that spreads like a chill about the heart!

Hark, your Honours both, is it the prisoner speaking? Nay, it is an interruption from the prisoner's accomplice. Weigh it carefully. A grave fine voice: yet judging by your Honours' four white eyes, an unjust one, hardly tolerable! The eyelids of the doomsman behind the chairs are thin, however. He seems bitterly to mutter, "Duty and I will bear with this much!" But our contemplating clipper-commodore looks fighting-white. His fallen mouth whimpers: "God, I cannot bear with it!"

"Turn them away, Matilda. This is the crying of a man's soul—I tell you—as he rides up through those deep valleys. See, the sun leaves them! What a grey return!"

"As I came up, my escape to-morrow. . . ."

"Then my heart cried out, I can't lose her. . . ."

"This longing for a face that—for all you had of it—might be vanished—torn away like a scrip—in death—"

"Ah—sir!"

Would your Honours tell us who spoke at the end? Will your Honours have the sound investigated? Fetch the police-book, constable! It was like the cry of a point of granite in the ebb of the sea, or a woman's voice in travail. Of what? Of a soul, an't please your brooding lordships—of a fine soul—a soul, in verity, larger than life, oh sour incredulous! An anomaly in human regulations! Have it catalogued! A disconcerting sound in the grim routine of prisons! We have blundered into this! What, you sway forward! Shall the court rise?

Aye, and you too, an't pleasure your straw-hatted excellency—of a little soul! Think you, the lady does as well as can be expected? A healthy woman—ready we think to tend another at pleasure! Your hat-brim nods against the wall, and your strong fingers loose the basket fill it trembles on the ground! Greedy sib! These fine births; though rare for the gossip, smack something tragically upon the holiday palate!

"Good-bye, Sir William Heans. . . . Death—and, they say, a better re-uniting—nay, even a kinder affection—are not so far from us all. . . . No—no—no, the other is not for me—or you."

Ah, old commodore, there you stand in the wind, with your face towards the wall! We might be reading into that cold stone and plaster—what? Hope—amazement—grief—despair—ruth—remorse! He sighs. Sick of courts, your worship! Let us spend our holiday with nature! Ho, for the waterfalls! He gathers up his basket with both hands, and, as he does so, stares round at the view. My God, what sunken eyes! What eyes! There! He turns away! He's gone! The path flings back his jerking footsteps!

And you—dark judge—have risen too! Those eyes show a glare of agitation. What is it that you would aid—what is it that you would spare? Nay, God defend us from that ugly brow: if it is not sparing, is it serving? Thou to serve—thou veteran punisher, what dost thou serve? An aroma of rectitude? A smell of honesty? Some small, smug tinkle of inner comfort? Indeed, where would we be, my lord, these wraiths dispersed!

Gyve and pistol slap, slickly away. Risen, and holding to a chair-back, he glances this way and that. To the right, the long veranda, raised on a four-feet parapet, stretches before three drawing-room casements; to the left, a shorter and higher span runs to a lofty corner, past the fourth and another. Cautiously pushing aside an armchair, he creeps stooping to the parapet, and drops into the garden. There, crouching on his haunches, he creeps through mignonette and "ragged Robin" to the corner. His wellingtons bruise the rosemary, and its sickly smell rises about him. The thorn of a white lady slits his coat sleeve. The sun yet dabbles the far hill-sides.

At the corner he rises, hurrying rearwards past woodbined windows, past kitchen and through stables, past coaches and diffident grooms—till, circling the house, he runs—runs—heavy-footed and fearful, sinister of face, to join the ladies at the Waterfall. Nay, it is a holiday, Mr. Daunt, for us lovers of Nature! Let to-morrow do for the treadmill of stern work again: "let to-morrow take thought for the things of itself."

* * * * *

Above the lash of water, where, in a stepped gorge, behind the

butterfly wings of ferns, the ladies could be seen exclaiming and laughing as they ascended, Daunt came upon his host, who had retraced his steps, it seems, for the forgotten tea-caddy and "a couple of those Indian cheroots for Captain Crozier." Here he was overtaking his guests with a gleaming face.

He laughed out, when, staring back, he saw Daunt. "Here are the cheroots," he said, thrusting the box towards the Superintendent; "will you run on and beg a hero's tolerance for the Captain?"

As Daunt received it in his efficient, steady way, he met the other's eyes.

"You asked me, sir," he said, "to bring a rug for the ladies, but I could find none in the drawing-room or on the veranda."

"Egad," muttered Shaxton, pressing on with a bottomless stare, "you could find none in the drawing-room or on the veranda?"

"No," answered Daunt, in a laughing voice; "but you would hardly tell me to go back!"



BOOK II

NEAP TIDE



CHAPTER I

THE PRISON ARTIST

At an upper window, in the first courtyard of the Cascades Prison, a convict known as Madam Ruth sat sewing. She was making night-shirts of the rough cloth made by the prisoners on the lovely Maria Island. Below, in a large courtyard, surrounded by low buildings of gold sandstone—black-barred and doored—some grey-gowned, check-aproned women were tending vegetables under a female. Among the plants, accident had dropped some hollyhock seed, and a red rosette fluttered on a yellow spear. The afternoon sun hung on the transverse bars of the opposite windows and on the shoulder of a great forest towering over the shingles to the left.

Madam Ruth was in black, and wore a black shawl over her dark red hair. She seemed hard. In appearance she was long-faced, young, and intellectually noble, but looked anæmic and melancholy. The room in which she sat was long and narrow—with the barred window at one end, and was freshly papered in gold on a faint blue ground. Two beds of unpainted wood touched one the north and one the west wall, and both were adorned with coverlets of elaborate embroidery. There was a fireplace and small fire in the corner between the beds. The rest of the appointments were rough enough, if entirely neat. Over the window-bed, a strung shelf held some black and brown volumes: among which were Johnson's satires, Scott's poems, and some numbers of *Blackwood's Magazine*. In the corner opposite there were some tomes of French History piled by the wall, and, hung above a small table, some little flower-paintings in water-colours on cardboard, and the sketch of a ruined chapel, faultily done, with a knight in stone lying within among the weeds, on which a little fawn was cropping—the subject taken, perhaps, from the "White Doe of Rylstone" by Mr. Wordsworth, a volume of whose verses, under that title, was hanging in the shelf. On the table were some loose water-colours in a cedar box, and a sketch, on a band-box lid, of an ancient, rough-cast house surrounded by decrepit trees.

The woman's head was bowed over her sewing. On the near bed lay some lint, bandages, and a pile of coarse night-dresses. Just beneath the window—which was open—projected the mouth

of the massive gate-house. Flagged with huge flags, it plunged heavily into the court like the port of some old hold: the houses of the end wall clinging upon it like "Phrygian Bonnets" upon a scallop.

The wheels of the outer gates creaked upon the flags, and Madam Ruth looked up. She was listening. The great gate was opened only for women off the ships, occasionally helpless soldiers, visitors, and high officials, so that the sound held something of import. The vegetable gardeners up the court stooped over their rakes the better to look outward through the gate. A warder in a chimney-pot looked in, from the gatehouse, ordering some women, who were washing at a sink cut from a single stone, to go indoors.

All, with Madam Ruth, heard the boom of a carriage coming across the Cascades bridge upon the level before the walls. "The Governor, or visitors, then!" Madam knew that all were hoping for "visitors." They were often fresh from home and freedom; and the factory seemed to strike each one so differently. She had risen. She now caught the bar of her window and peered down. She was crying. What hard, inscrutable lines for tears!

The chaise had stopped, and she could hear the boom of voices in the gatehouse. Somebody seemed to be speaking with too much enthusiasm, answered by the turnkey with a harsh, good-humoured bark. The visitors were often nervous. . . . Madam wiped the closed casement in front of her eyes with the night-shirt.

First Mr. Carnt, the prison writer, came out of the gate. She drew back a little, her face graver. His tall hat was on one side, and he tugged his dark bronze whiskers, staring consciously about in his light bored way. When he could not be making a joke, he seemed always wild and bored. He was a prisoner.

Slowly appeared Mr. Shaneson, the turnkey, tall, and harshly, yet courteously, laconic. He was followed by a small, fair-whiskered gentleman, very pale, in a tall hat, cape, and tasselled boots. He kept pushing on his cane with both hands, and staring about with both eyes that winced even as they stared. His face, aquiline, fine, and aspiring, was creased and strangely drawn. He stooped much as he came slowly into the courtyard.

Crying out, Madame Ruth ran and flung herself upon the inner bed. There she held her mouth, and laughed, and sobbed, until she slept.

CHAPTER II

WINE WITH MR. MAGRUDER

THERE was a party at Albuera House in Davey Street.

Hobarton was singing with a cold south wind. The house, with its brass doorstep, iron railings, window pediments, and brown freestone, might have been shipped *holus bolus* hot from Bath or Tunbridge Wells. Davey Street sloped steeply towards the sea, and the two lit carriages, waiting without, had their brakes down, and their wheels blocked with drags.

The prisoner, Jarvis Carnt, wandered up with his rusty chimney-pot, his seedy great-coat with the little shoulder cape, his war-worn Malacca, and paused on the threshold. The door was ajar and opened upon a square, slated ante-room. Wandering in, he sat, with an assumed negligence, on his cane: his hat—nonchalantly awry as its habit was—still upon his falling, untidy hair. His face was thinnish, bored-looking, and harassed. He seemed rather humorous, rather sad, rather wicked, rather affectionate, rather sick, and rather viciously on his rickety dignity. His buttoned shoes, round which his trousers were strapped, had lost two buttons on the left foot, and were very old and carefully cleaned.

A man-servant—old and pompous—issued at this moment from a side-door with some tea on a tray. He came ceremoniously towards the prisoner, but at a closer glance, asked his business—staring grimly. Carnt, with a forced air of condescension, collapsing rapidly to one of mere harassment, coughed, removed his hat with a crestfallen air, replaced it with bravado, and said, in a fine, rattling voice, "A message from Major Leete of the Cascades Prison, for a gentleman named O'Crone—if he be present."

The other, in a deep bleat, said he would "discover," and passed with the tray through the end door, from which came a flush of light and women's voices. Carnt went wearily round the dim hall, sitting on his cane and staring into print after print of Hogarth's, "Idle and industrious apprentices." With a sudden cry of impatience he left these—these famous prints indissolubly con-

nected with the repellent side of London—and returned into the middle of the hall, whence a faint and soothing smell of wine and fruit came to him. His pale, puffy face fell, as with some sad thought, as he stood tapping his cane on the floor behind him.

The butler suddenly returned and announced that the gentlemen were at their wine. "Mr. Magruder," said he, "asks you to remove your coat, and step in with your message." For an instant Carnt hesitated, and then began to peel off his coat. His old clawhammer was green, patched under the elbows, and lacking in a breast button, but if *passé*, it had an elaborate once-fashionable air. His rusty satin stock—mounted without collar—was transfixed with two immense pins joined by a chain. His linen was soiled and dirty, but his hands were roughly clean. The butler flustered him by offering to remove his coat, which he relinquished warily, clutching suddenly at it with his first free arm, and pulling it to him that the other might not see the lacerated arm-holes.

The butler opened the first door on the left, and motioned him in with elaborate ceremony. Carnt strode in with pale face and baffled air. There were four men in the room, two at a mahogany and two by the fire. Wine was on the table, and candles. The room was of a gold-black tint, with portraits on the walls of two broad-faced men with hands in breasts—and one of a woman trying to smile through some inner harshness. Three of the men made no movement as the butler shut the door behind him.

A little man, with fair whiskers, and a snarling crestfallen face, perked forward by the mantelpiece and looked from Carnt to the company. His air was mystified. He seemed puzzled at the reception of the new-comer, and indeed, barely certain of his own. He frowned, however, and seemed himself about to make some advance, when an old, careful gentleman at the table head spoke with reserve and deliberation. "Sit down, Mr. Carnt. Will you take some wine?" (Then with a slurring and subtly sour modulation) "This is the gentleman—Mr. O'Crone—for whom you have a message from the women's factory. Perhaps you—er—Mr. O'Crone—would take a chair beside Mr. Carnt, when you may learn what you desire of the life of the women from him." He bowed coldly towards the fire.

The little man sprang hungrily from the fire-place, and advanced on Carnt with outstretched hand. Misplaced as was his eagerness, he seemed nearly reckless of concealing it. Perhaps the necessity had gone, and was dragging down with it self-respect. Or was it temper had him by the neck? So earnest was he for news or message, that he seemed unaware of Carnt's nice and tragic attempt to accept Magruder's invitation, and his own hand, with some measure of deliberate ease. As Carnt took a chair—concealing, as he did so, the lapel of his coat with his hand—O'Crone began to whisper, even as he drew another before him:

ingratiating himself, as it were, with snarling smile alone, that he might unburden his heart, without compliment.

Magruder rose with a decanter, and, waddling along, placed it between Carnt and O'Crone. Carnt shivered back into his chair (as the magistrate bent over them) watching, spell-bound, his stern eyes. Motioning hospitably at the decanter, Magruder drew back and returned. As he did so, the man left at the fire joined him and his companion. He had coal-black whiskers, and grinned, grim and half-indifferent, like some keen, kind hound of death, in leash: "You conjecture right, Doctor," muttered Magruder, in answer to a grinning whisper; "it is the one who conveys the assigned women from the prison. Hush, hush!" Did Carnt hear him? His face was of a purplish grey; the same colour as that to which the face of O'Crone was turning as he listened to his message.

"Major Leete," he said, in a low voice (it might have been remarked that the bearing of the message was known to the somewhat disquieted trio at the head of the table)—"Major Leete wishes me to say that he regrets he can do nothing against special advices, and that the signature of the Duke, which you have submitted, though still carrying some weight at home, is not sufficient to cancel the special prison-regulation attaching to the keep of this woman. Major Leete suggests, if Mr. O'Crone still has the leisure, and with the signature to back him, a letter to the Home Office might bring about some commutation of the penalty—even a conditional pardon."

O'Crone had poured Carnt and himself a glass of Madeira, and as the latter concluded his message, he bent over his, and hastily drank it. He remained noticeably pale. For a while he sat in silence, with hand on cheek, concealing his face from the three gentlemen—who muttered, fingering their almonds, with a plausible appearance of concentration.

Now Jarvis Carnt, despite the constraint under which he laboured, began to observe O'Crone with a sort of curiosity. It might be his own affection for Madam Ruth was not such that he could comprehend this earnestness—nay agony—of one who was not a prisoner; on the other hand perhaps it was. O'Crone, like his host, was in evening dress—white cravat, satin waistcoat, kid boots—there was nothing distinctive about him except his face, his hastiness, a slight frill to his shirt, and a pair of diamond sleeve-buttons. Carnt knew this traveller of distinction by town-rumour, and by one other interview. Arriving in a wooden steam-vessel in the Derwent, he had—like Colonel Mundy, Darwin, and M. Domeny de Rienzi—done the usual round of the prisons and waterfalls. The ship proving a private yacht, and himself a person of intellect and means, though a romantic recommendation to Hobarton, hardly palliated an insatiable curiosity and peremptory temper, which, jarring from the first on the overworked officials, and stipendiaries (sick already of the

scribbling traveller, and his subsequent horror-mongering in London), culminated disastrously from a hostile interest in the "prison systems," to a too tragic curiosity in a welfare of a particular prisoner, incarcerated in the Cascades for murder. Like a Phoenix from the flames of the gentleman's indignation against "the system," was born a romantic letter, demanding a personal interview with the murderess, and refused on the excuse of a high-strung female's frail health and approaching release (she was to be liberated on a conditional pardon in five years). Out of this had sprung the quarrel, already public property, between the prison officials and their persistent petitioner: the latter not improving his position by losing his discretion, and backing an amazing demand for her release on Ticket-of-leave with an exalted signature; indeed, only bringing to a head the now obvious pique of his hosts. It was now that his tragic requests began to smell of appeal, and, as in most human cases, when one has begun with an exalted argument, and later adopted this method, it was soon apparent that he was done. The authorities were beginning individually, and then collectively, to avoid him as a busybody, an offended prancer, a bewitched person, a crazy devotee, without solid faith in his bona fides, or in a backing out-of-office, if renowned, and but chillingly inscribed.

The female prisoner thus forced into notice had been transported for a tragic crime, and Carnt, in his capacity of clerk to the factory, saw her weekly, and had once even spoken with her. Madam Ruth's life-sentence had been given her for homicide, and the history of her crime closely resembled that of Lucy Ashton, or rather the legend on which the great weaver, Scott, wove his saddest and most poetical tapestry. She had shot her dissipated husband. A special interest clung to her figure in the prison. As one of the commandant's servants, and for some reasons connected with her state of health and nurture, prison discipline was somewhat lightened for her. She shared a single room with a fellow-servant; was attached to the hospital; and had the privilege of private dress. Thus she had been seen for three years reading or drawing at her window; hurrying with head down from hospital; or wheeling the commandant's child in the quadrangle. She drew pictures of flowers, which were brought to her now and then by Mr. Shaneson, the quadrangle women, or even saved for her, in a withered state, from the table of the Commandant. Some examples of these Mr. Shaneson had in his room off the gate for the amusement and charity of visitors. Sir John Franklin, himself, had accepted one of a cabbage flower. It was indeed the habit of the generous visitor to buy one as a memento. In short, it was in this room, with its sidelong peep-holes or curious places of espial, for observing unseen the knocker or incomer at the gate; with its rows of light manacles, leather tawse, and iron gags; the little

pictures of single flowers always held by a conventional pink hand with motto, that Carnt docketed his ledgers. In the evening, as he lingered in the arch of the gate, preparatory to exit, he would often see the woman hugging the wall with the child's carriage, or talking with the females, few of whom seemed to bear her malice for her privileges. Yes, he would often see the tall and fragile figure, and sometimes a stooping woman picking up a toy in her track. He had once fallen in love with her auburn hair and her melancholy, but only once had dared to speak with her. He knew what it would mean, did he accost her—while she—with her chill, hard face—was not one who looked at men.

It happened thus.

He had ascended one evening to the Major's dining-room, at the door of which he had been bidden to wait. The soldier-servant had gone in, leaving him in the passage. Below, on the flags, he had left a string of good-conduct women, who had been assigned, by doctor's orders, to domestic situations. He was often chosen to conduct the reformed women on his way townwards. It seemed beneath the gravity of the free warder—unless in special cases. This was a favour that he loathed, but dared not, or was too kind to refuse—loathed because of its indignity to one whose pose was the swell devil-may-care. For the females, pleased at their "fresh chance," and even, for the moment, timid, they seldom gave him trouble. Indeed, there is no doubt, he was made use of by the prison psychologists, because the women bowed to the easy merriness of his character, his strange, witty way, his good-humour, tact, and ready tongue—even if they batted on his sensitiveness to ridicule and affectionate indecision of will.

It was the Major's habit to descend himself into the yard, and address a few words to the women before signing them through the gate, but that winter, grown rheumatically with the Cascades mists, the clerk had been bidden up with the book and he had docketed his charges and harangued them from the window. That night, as Carnt waited, an opposite door opened, and a woman in black came into the passage with a kettle and tray of medicine bottles. Seeing her bewildered, as with a service unusual, and more at the absence of the man-servant whom she wildly looked for, Carnt offered to give the man the tray, whereupon she spoke to him in a low voice, saying it was Mr. Carnt, and she was afraid his life was not congenial to him, there, any more than was her own; but, please, would he make the best of it, and keep his heart up. Carnt saw that it was Madam Ruth, but for heaviness could say nothing. The woman put the tray into his hands, and with a touch on his arm, went back. He was waiting there with the tray when the man came out, but it was some seconds before he explained how he got it. This was Carnt's one interview with Madam Ruth. He did, however,

sometimes pass her in the laundry-courtyard on her way to and from the hospital ; but her face, though it smiled, had beseeched him vaguely not to speak. Once only, on a day of exasperations, he had dared whisper "Ruth" as she passed, but the fragile figure, when next he met it, was so grandly troubled, the pale face so fearfully averted, that he had been grateful enough, when one day she palely smiled.

Now Carnt sat and faced this accomplished traveller, so broken by a last assurance that he would not be allowed to even look on the poor artist of the Cascades. Short as was the time Carnt had been in the room, his wine-driven wits, aided by rumour, had perceived admonition in the manner of Magruder and Tresham, the two magistrates, and even of their companion, Dr. Wardshaw, directed not only against himself. Indeed, he, the prisoner, felt himself if anything happier than the poor gentleman, nay—in the higher favour. He knew that the message he bore was not friendly ; more especially the second thought about the Home Office, with its sneer at the conditional pardon. That something in the traveller's bearing—that mixture of tragic appeal and peremptory demand—that subtle weakness in a proud carriage—which had shaken the faith of all in him and his backing, had chilled Leete also, whom Carnt had overheard to add, as he took the mesage, that "money-bags has seen the prison, but shall not interfere with a hysterical woman for a mere buttonholing of a great man,"—referring of course to O'Crone, to whom Carnt himself had shown the laundry and great hall. Leete was ill and might be forgiven some shortness of temper. For Carnt's own feelings, he had, at that visit, noted an excitement and compunction in O'Crone, where other visitors—like O'Crone, not taking their guide for a prisoner—had been grim, mildly ribald, or nervously congratulatory. At this moment he knew something of what the man—before the pictures in the porter's room and under the windows of the courtyards—had managed to conceal. Indeed, Carnt might well have hated this figure with the stoop, the fair whiskers and the heavy head, but that he had seen a head of the same reflective cast, bent not unlike it, so often, in that upper window on the left of the gate in Courtyard 1. One of those surges of grim generosity to which he was subject shot into his heart as he leant with an elbow on the cloth, stiffly sipping at his wine. A tragic frown was on his sickly face. He did not know it, but he was eyeing O'Crone with a grim distaste. His wild heart was troubled with sympathy for the poor traveller, facing, like himself, a black wall of authority, and burning with it for the woman whose sad and shrinking vision he had grown to seek along the quadrangles. He bent forward and began to talk of Madam Ruth, unquestioned, and in a low voice : at times much moved—as it were, sulkily harassed—at others with a wide, stiff ease, as he recollected his position. While doing so, he consciously

or unconsciously revealed more and more of his half-official position in the factory, and in a while, O'Crone's face rose again out of its apathy, and eyed him steadily.

CHAPTER III .

"MY ONCE DEAR FRIENDS, THE HYDE-SHAXTONS"

IT was an afternoon a year and two months after Carnt's evening at Magruder's, and he was to meet Heans at the tavern known as "Muster-Master-Mason's Place," at the top end of Macquarie Street, on the right of the old place of execution. It was a roughish house, frequented by sub-overseers, people with business in the prison, and turnkeys, and that he might catch the late-working clerk, Heans, when he could get it, armed himself with the after-sunset pass. Their reason for meeting to-night was one of some excitement. As for the place, it was handy to Mr. Carnt, and there was attention and a view! From its veranda you saw the town and bay (forsaken now of the heroic bomb-ships), and across the pretty rivulet, under your eyes, sat the heavy courtyards of the prison, gold of stone and black of bars. Heans, dismounting at the veranda, could see the women taking the air in their grey gowns and mutes—some sad and dark, some light and lackadaisical—like figures in a frowning box. A few were gazing up, past him, at the vast hills.

It was a close evening. Keeping the bridle in his hand, he carefully wiped a bench with a faded handkerchief, and sat down in the veranda. Out past the horse, his eye looked down with a glint of eagerness, a touch of the haggard, upon the gate of the near courtyard, and the foliaged bridge, by which Carnt would come. Sir William would show a certain agitation—in a word his gold eyeglass would drop on his breast—when his "acquaintance, Mr. Carnt," emerged lightly from that spy-holed port. Poor Carnt, with his secret sentiment and hidden feeling (Sir William would reflect) was "d—bly out-of-place" behind those gates.

Sir William's thin, ceremonious face, to-night was slightly hectic—that is more so than its habit. It seemed that he, with difficulty, viewed the hated prospect before him without exhilaration. Now he would fan himself with a worn canary glove, or knock the dust artistically from his much-brushed if divinely fitted spencer; now rise on his tight plaid trousers—so carefully embroidered—and clink delicately to and fro in the tether of his bridle.

There was no one but himself on the veranda, though from

the passage came a scraping of feet, eager speaking and a tapping of glass. A single elbow in a torn black cloak projected about the doorway, as though the accommodation of the little room were overtaxed. This lively and somewhat mud-bespattered limb held something arresting for Sir William Heans; twice he turned about and gave it his stare. The man, however, disclosed no more of his identity—only once showing the point of a sharp nose, and a hand uplifting a hair ring and a porter glass.

Heans rose and called "Islip" through the doorway. He had been reseated for some minutes, when the landlord hurried out, followed by the prison porter, Shaneson. The latter seemed in a hurry to be gone, not only from the tavern, but from the company of the man in the dirty cloak whose bearded face Heans could now see in the door, delaying him as he came.

"Mr. Carnt!" exclaimed Shaneson, rather blatantly, "yes, he'll be by now if he's not wanted by the 'biddies.' There's a couple asking out, though the bulk's due on Friday. I tell you a gentleman like you would never have resisted 'em!"

There was some energetic giggling within, and Shaneson hurried down upon the road, followed suddenly by the passage-loafer at an undignifying run. He was holding a chimney-pot to his head and his glass dribbled over in the other hand, while he plied Shaneson with questions—to be answered at last, as Shaneson disappeared over the embankment, by a halt and a swart cry of, "It's not discipline. I'll not move an inch for that—not if you was to appeal till you was blue for it."

Heans had observed them quietly. Something of a student of the human being, he might well have been excused had he failed to place the meagre man in the cloak. Voluble in speech, and full of an insinuating disquiet, he gave an impression of crazy strain. The whole cunning make up of him from his beard to his coarse boots seemed made for another. While his ingratiating talk constantly struggled back into the reserved, his grating comradely tone shrilled with a high demand for sympathy in some ill-stifled need. It looked as if he relied rather on appeal and persuasion—even hectoring—than an attempt to rate or outwit his fellow-man. The easy half-jocular manner of the turnkey would alone have assured this. Observe two men, and if one address the other with the deference due to a woman at one moment, and the next with a jocose good-fellowship, you may be fairly certain there is disappointment threatening one of them.

As the stranger returned, the landlord—a tall, sly man, with grey hair—came along the veranda. "Mr. Shaneson's not the one to sweat a thing out of," he said, in a slow, distinct voice. "Your order, Sir William? Them turnkeys want knowing."

"Yes, indeed," said the other; "gin, Islip. I pity the man that attempts it."

Islip, an old sub-overseer, knew well when to chime with the well-known "prisoner's growl."

"Gentleman interested in the factory," he gave information in a low voice; "skipper of a private-sealer, they tell me, endeavouring to ease the drefful life of a relative immersed in them walls. Odd gentleman! One day he'll question Mr. Carnt or Mr. Shaneson, and next he'll pass them by without a look!"

The man in question was again mounting the veranda. He lifted his head and glared at Sir William Heans, but that gentleman looked away with almost an insulting languor. To Islip Heans was nodding graciously, and presently he asked if Mr. Carnt had sent a message.

"Will be up, if possible, at twenty to the hour," said the landlord, "and would be up before, but the biddies' as been playing up over the new washing regulations. A guard of red-coats went in over the bridge this very morning."

"What! Won't the little vixens soap themselves?"

"Nay, it's the floors, your honour. They prefers to pass the water over them as they has a grudge with, so Mr. Jarvis says. Mr. Jarvis 'as 'imself, I understand, had several buckets."

Sir William was never sympathetic about your bad women.

"The huzzies!" says he, in a quick, distinct voice. "Carnt has no luck. I declare I would sooner be wardsman to a road-gang than cooped up in that female bedlam. 'Pon my word, what a life Government leads us fellows! No consideration for feelings, repute, habit! Remonstrance or complaint unheeded! Your most courteous letter unanswered! The publicist at home careless what befalls us!"

He leant forward, slapping his mouth with his fine canary glove, with a throw of his eyes towards the man in the torn cloak, who, again in the veranda, was standing somewhat heavily beside the door, kicking the plaster with one foot. Sir William Heans, it may be mentioned, had penned in all eight pompous, distinguished, painstaking "complaints" to the Home Office, only one of which had gone further than the waste-basket of the head constable—that one, indeed, grown flippant with despair, penetrating to the desk of a police magistrate, and pulling its writer after it into the sour gloom of the bar, where he was told to remove his canary gloves, where his fine air barely stood him before the stern phrase "admonished" and the term "an impudent fellow"; and whence he escaped with the "obnoxious smell" of the dock on his delicate hands.

"Just what I says to Mr. Shaneson two years ago," fluted the soft voice of the landlord. "What be they thinking of shutting up a gentleman among them termagants? But—himself—he cocks his eye in 'is funny way—you know Mr. Carnt!—and flings off one of his jokes about his 'ladies of the Cask-hades.' All the same, Mr. Carnt's not the man he was two years past. You'll agree, Sir William, the years are showing on him. A joke's a rare thing now from Mr. Jarvis."

"Carnt is a very soft-hearted man, you know," said Sir William,

loudly and bitterly. "They're breaking Mr. Carnt's heart." As he spoke, the other man came along the veranda, demanding in a sort of patter "some of the bottled pale ale." "A moment—a moment," added he, with a singularly dreadful pallor, "I can't help hearing you talking of Mr. Carnt. Now, sir, is not your name Sir William Heans?"

"And yours, sir, I am informed, is Captain O'Crone." (Bow-ing in a half-abstracted, gracious manner.)

"Yes, sir, but if you are Sir William Heans, I may say I know Mr. Carnt well, and have heard him speak of you in a friendly way."

Heans' face did not respond to these overtures. It was also somewhat yellow.

"Now then, sir, you musn't bother the gentleman," laughed the landlord, taking his glass. "Was it gin, Sir William?"

"Gin, Islip." (He tapped his canary knuckles on the form beside him.) "You do not bother me, sir," continued he. "Sit here and talk, if it is your wish."

Islip shot down on the speaker a sly, sour, blindish look, and passed indoors. For Heans, he leant forward, fiddling with his bridle, a little flushed suddenly, and knocked out of his reserve. The other, having taken his seat on the form, sat looking down on the prison with little, blind, pale eyes, and a small ineffectual snarl of good fellowship.

"Good heavens," drawled Sir William, bronzing somewhat, "is it really you, sir?"

"Sir—sir, no irony!" whispered the other, in a tone of querulous disquiet; "I cannot do it. You and Mr. Carnt would engage me and all I hope for in a calamitous project—no, I cannot. Sir, it spells ruin! I was friendless and hopeless when I met Mr. Carnt at Albuera House. My God—he was sympathetic then! Now I am in a net between you and that man. You know what you would do. Yet I look in your face, and I say you have kindness and—and honour. I wish to appeal to you as a broken-hearted man—as one who has been patient—one who has haunted these hills in fear and longing."

Sir William had suddenly risen, and now, turned half-away, he bit his lip over the prison, his arms folded, his face brooding and somewhat fallen.

"It is no use, sir," said he; "you cannot get rid of me. Carnt will not move without his friend Sir William Heans, and I admit I have made but a poor attempt to prejudice him against my freedom. Ah, sir, you find us somewhat weak! I little thought a year ago that I should come to understand the word 'desperate,' and how it preys on a fellow's courtesy and endurance. Upon my word, sir, Carnt has had degradation on degradation thrust upon him, culminating in the post of conductor of the prison-women, sir, from the factory to their place of service; dragging him raw through the town, subject to silly indignity from

every free cad or vicious emancipist! I, sir—I have stood the indignities showered upon a prisoner who" (he made a little gesture with his canary gloves down his yet marvellous trousers), "still dresses as he would wish to be remembered by his English friends. My status is known to be such that I may be whipped at any time for disobedience or negligence, and the underlings do not forget it. I am repeatedly told that I am 'dead to the law.' I can hold nothing of my own—no particle of property. I must obtain a pass from a reluctant source, or be within doors at sundown. Should I go out for a game of cards, every petty official I meet halts me, and orders out my permission."

"Sir," cried O'Crone, "I heard you were an architect."

"I am no longer employed . . . in that capacity."

They were silent as Islip came out with their refreshment and returned.

For a while O'Crone looked as if he would have asked what was his business, but in the event elected not to. He had listened during this bitter revelation with a glare of cynical irony. Yet a gleam of sympathy, quite gentle and kind, glinted in the daunted and sorrowful cunning of his face. With his head low on his shoulders, he rose and moved nearer to Sir William Heans.

"I could almost forgive you, sir," he said, hushing his voice, "in your bitter desire. If anything could prevail on me to risk it with you, it would be that repeated irritation of a prey of petty power. If anything could make palatable to me the way in which you and your friend have netted me about, have taken advantage of my anguish and my adoration for an erring woman, it would be this destructive suffering which you have confided to me . . . yet" (in a low, impressive, almost gentle tone), "have you thought well to what you—you in your weariness, jeopardy, and impatience of spirit—nay, you as I met you at the Shaxtons' a year ago—would risk this tender and shrinking soul?"

"Yes—yes, Captain O'Crone," said Heans, now patting his horse with an air of quizzical weariness; "should the plan miscarry, a year perhaps upon her sentence, if your great friends do not interfere with a suddenness for which I give them credit; for Jarvis Carnt and myself, it will be, at the best, that thing they call a 'chain-gang' (you have seen them working on the roads), with Port Arthur waiting on a last skedaddle for it." He put up his tumbler and finished its contents, the other watching him rather sympathetically than evilly.

"My G—d, sir, not that place of dogs and black mountains!" Heans turned with his glove still on his horse, and quizzed him a little through his eyeglass.

"Dogs?" he said, with an ironical obtundity; "well, sir, they tell me there are dogs that guard the isthmus—good dogs, many of them, I daresay; and mountains—yes, there are mountains—devilish, high, black mountains. And you go there

in an old decayed cutter, sir, through a cold yellow sea. And you pass in, they say, through giant gates of decayed black rock: And the harbour, sir—the harbour is all o'erhung with a blight of foliage; and choked with a blight of leathery seaweeds; and shadowed with a blight of immeasurable forests, so that if a man cast himself overboard, he is like to be strangled in the seaweeds; and if he get away his voice only will be heard of; and if he be carried ashore, he soon grows desperate in that wall of close, black hills, and in case he should escape his sins, they bury him in a graveyard out in the sea. And the very ships, sir, crawl in stubbornly round this dead-man's isle for the clogging kelp about their keels. And if you ask me what they do there, sir, I'll inform you that they spend their lives like legendary Sisyphus with his unruly globe, shouldering trees from those unending forests and replanting them as jetties *pour encourager* the navies of Tasmania."

Sir William made a little laughing noise, and straightened his handsome shoulders. "That is what these fellows tell me, Captain O'Crone," he added, tautening his gloves at the wrist and speaking in a somewhat forced and social manner. "It may be a paradise for what faith I place in their veracity!" So saying, he stepped down upon the road, and patting his old beast upon the neck, began to hitch up his girths.

"You're going?" asked O'Crone, staring out amazement, anger and pity at him from under grudging brows.

"The sun's going and so must I," said Sir William, "unless I wish to be stopped by every small official in Macquarie Street in whose harried eyes my trousers catch. My once dear friends, the Hyde-Shaxtons, used to call it my 'evening bathe.' . . . See, Mr. O'Crone, you have angered the turnkey, and he has delayed Carnt. I beg of you, as you hope soon to see that woman's face—as you hope for Carnt's help—to assume some dignity and reserve."

You should have seen O'Crone laugh.

"Now, now, Sir William Heans, you take too much for granted!" whispered he. "Should our connection with you add to my calmness! When first I met Carnt, it was pure sympathy with him. He would take a given sum for having her out on the bridge, there. I believed him, too, when he came saying it meant certain discovery for him, and he couldn't do it. I persuaded him to come too. He agreed. Then greed grew upon him, and nothing would do for him but he must have the woman risked with a certain Sir William Heans, who, they told me, had been saved hardly from the penalties of one 'absconding' by official clemency. Is this interesting story true? I ask you. Or is a piece of gossip more accurate which whispers of a reputation being bound up with your forgiveness? See—I care not which it is!—They are equally threatening. Sir William, I am explaining my wild demeanour—my somewhat desperate air.

Sir William Heans thinks it sufficient to advise a more discreet demeanour ! ”

Heans put one foot in the stirrup, and before answering, looked over his saddle at the prison. “ You put it,” he said, “ as if Sir William Heans had counselled calmness of a drowning friend while his hands were hanging on his shoulders. I put it that your hands are on the rocks while mine are on the heaving seaweeds.” (He got gracefully into the saddle. The valley was already in twilight. High in a remote wood flashed the retreating spears. . Sir William drew out a black enamel watch).

“ Ah, it is past six. When you see Mr. Carnt, would you be good enough to tell him I have an engagement with a Mr. Charles Oughtryn ? ” (He cackled amiably.) “ He and his remarkable daughter are desirous of seeing me no later than 6.30.”

O’Crone went to the steps, and came down, still with those bereaved, dissatisfied eyes.

“ Ah, I saw you only last Friday,” he said, spitefully, “ with a child on horseback. I suppose that was your Miss Oughtryn ? ”

“ Miss Abelia Oughtryn,” corrected Sir William handsomely. He was somewhat hectically jocund as he arranged his reins. “ I can assure you, sir, a lady as uncommon as her name.”

“ Indeed I have heard rumours of an uncommon lady, but pictured her somewhat older than the girl who accompanied you. This was a quite young girl, weak-looking, with blue glasses.”

Sir William’s glass fell from an abstracted eye, and he stared at the harbour. “ Miss Abelia rode with me on that day,” he said, grandly enough. “ We went towards the ferry to see the first heath. But there was none in bloom.”

“ Ah, there was romance in it ! ” snarled the other. “ Indeed, the lady I was with told me you had taught the young woman to ride, and that her attachment to you was pathetic.”

Heans greyed just a little more. “ Sir,” said he, with a light laugh, “ I fear she would have better suited herself with some one less pettily tyrannised—than your light words suggest.”

“ And you desert your charge without a thought ? ”

“ It is only a child, Mr. O’Crone,” said the other, laughing a little, yet with a groaning in his tone, “ a young thing, who will forget me before my old nag here.”

“ And yet you have been living in the man Oughtryn’s house, sir, and benefiting by his friendship and hospitality?—so the woman informed me, in whose carriage I sat.”

Sir William was still laughing a little. “ In what capacity—tell me—did the lady tell you I—er—used the man’s house ? ”

“ Rather as you pleased in your self-liberality—nay, forgive me—I did not credit the rancorous woman.”

“ A kind woman,” said Sir William.

“ What ! ”

“ She knew very well—the truth.”

“ The truth ? ” cried the other, advancing nearer, a tremor of

apprehension in his ironical face . . . Heans put in his eyeglass and leant over on his knee towards him.

"I will tell you," he said, swinging his cane slowly and speaking with a somewhat hectic air, "since you will have me even earthier than it is wise for me yet to believe I am. I was assigned as groom, or (let us be definite) 'pass-holder servant-man' to this Charles Oughtryn sixteen months ago. I had been seen in conversation with Captain Stiff, of the schooner *Emerald*, too frequently for the police, and in the end—a humorous end of which you appear to have heard an echo—I was ordered by the police-magistrate to be assigned out as a servant. 'White-fingered men' were not then in demand, but some one told Oughtryn at Fraser's Club, and Oughtryn applied for me. Some time before, he had asked me if I would train his young miss to the saddle. What would have become of me I don't know, but for this old fellow—himself a freed prisoner—who had often seen me riding for my pleasure. He was jubilant at obtaining for his own what he was pleased to describe as 'a gentleman with some varnish.' Indeed, he seems to have a feeling that it is a perishable article, which it is a public duty to preserve. Oughtryn has a small property at Bagdad, and I would gladly have been altogether removed there from Hobarton, but this, as I am under the personal guidance of Mr. Daunt, is forbidden. Oughtryn, if rough beyond notion, has treated me with consideration; and I have had considerable latitude for a convict servant."

O'Crone was glaring at him with his bearded face fallen and sinister.

"And now," he said, at last, "it is cut and run at the first opportunity!"

"And now," echoed the other, tapping his varnished boot with his cane, "it is cut and run—at the first opportunity."

His fingers clenched, as he spoke, upon his whip, and relaxed with the worn, canary glove split across the knuckles. He smiled a faint, forced smile and advanced it ruefully towards the other's face. "Answer that, sir, if you can," he said. "My pride, under raw supervision, is wearing bare. It has been long past the standing capacity of just anger. Look at these darns—rotting fast, my old acquaintance, Mr. O'Crone. Human thread will no more!"

O'Crone threw up his hand despairingly, and turned back towards the veranda. He had gone but a few steps—his head bowed, his cane rapping on the great stones of the fore-way—when a party of three men issued from the door and descended helter-skelter upon him. They were sub-overseers in grey, and as they moved aside for O'Crone, one plucked at his cloak with a rude laugh, and pointed down upon the prison. "There's Mr. Jarvis, now," said he, "stringing the biddies out of the gate."

O'Crone put up his elbow and snarled, but as they went joking down the sloping bank, he turned and stared back at the bridge.

A small door had been opened in the nearest gate, and a black figure, which might have been that of Shaneson, stood just outside. A man in a tall hat, with a swaggering air, was accompanying three shawled women across the rivulet: the latter arm in arm, the former sauntering a pace in the rear. One of the women tripped in the twilight as she went for sheer light-heartedness; the others seemed old, and did not remove their faces from the ground. The man kept his eyes up upon the ale-house, and hardly once changed their direction.

Sir William had started off down the inn-approach, but reined up suddenly some twenty yards from the road. His fine voice came up in a polite hail. "You will not be able to see him, Captain O'Crone. Here comes Carnt, now, with his three women."

O'Crone said nothing, but stood glooming at the party with his two hands on his cane. The thin, nice figure of Islip was clearing the glasses from the veranda, pallid with the valley's pallor. They heard the door in the prison-gate close, and the sudden "mingle-mangle" of a bell. Sir William sat where he was until Carnt and the women vanished underneath the eminence, when with a sharp farewell of O'Crone, he urged his horse towards the road. On a sudden, there, halted before him at the bottom, was Jarvis Carnt, and the women, and in another moment Carnt's figure, detaching itself, came running up towards him. As the prison-writer approached Heans (who pulled up) he laughed loudly, though his pale face was agitated. He put a hand on Sir William's knee, muttering something, and patting his old beast. "Oh, I'm famous, thanks," he said, and suddenly turning, ran back. Sir William's stiff figure had hardly stirred in his saddle, and he had said nothing at all.

O'Crone had been late to detect Carnt's approach, but had instantly started to meet him. Carnt had broken back, however, before Captain O'Crone reached Sir William's side, and as the other came behind him, Heans put out his hand.

"Stay, sir," he said, "Carnt gives us terrible news. Leete is worse, and is to have command at Port Arthur, and my Heaven, sir, they say he'll take his servants with him!"

"What's that," cried O'Crone, "his servants! Why then, my God, they'll take my Ruth away!"

"Yes, she will be taken! Next Monday is the day rumoured."

"Mr. Carnt will get her out on Friday! There'll be women out on Friday!"

"Else she'll go, sir, and we're left," said Sir William, trembling in his saddle.

"This may be false! You and that man——"

"False!"

"You and that man——"

"It is all false—false as life itself! There's not a word of truth in it, or in any of us, or Life, sir—in man, woman, or

child. It is a lie. You and I are a lie, sir; and that prison; and the confounded, jangling bell. And the hills in their shadow—what a pitiful lie! Everything—hurt or joy, or faithfulness like yours, or hope like mine, Carnt's generosity, Islip's spying, deference—all a damnable fancy! Why should I be brave enough to hope—or you mad enough to care!"

"Hold!" snarled O'Crone, touching his arm, "I believe in your bitterness."

CHAPTER IV

AN OLD HOUSE STAINED OF WEATHER AND MEMORIES—

A REPUTATION AND A REMARK

STRANGE that Sir William should have been talking of the Hyde-Shaxtons, for he was to see them both again that night!

It was near the half-hour when Mr. Oughtryn's groom arrived at the house. It was one of a row of buildings on a hillside and was approached through a long garden. Heans turned off the main street into a lane, and let himself in through a double back-gate. An abrupt cliff frowned over the back, and out of this, extensive stables—now much neglected—had been hollowed. The yard was flagged between these and the house, which was a long, oblong, ungabled structure, with a low shingle-roof almost hiding a cramped second story. It was a faint, old, imperishable dwelling, with wild bushes in unsought places, growing it seemed from the stones.

The house was harshly built, and had a dignity bred rather of the bourgeoning of human necessity than the arts. Oughtryn, his daughter, and a woman inhabited seven rooms in the centre-portion, while Heans had two ground chambers entered from the yard on the right. The left end, including a large conical room or meeting hall, was uninhabited. Heans' sitting-room was at first plainly furnished with some chairs of pink horsehair, a beaufet, and a dining-table, while the bedroom, looking on the yard, was simple and clean. To the former room, however, Oughtryn had added from time to time a few "gentleman-like adornments"; such as some prints of strangled race-horses; a large copper *épergne* like an outstretched hand, asking nothing less than pumpkins; a stuffed clock in a glass-case; and an immense piece of catacomb furniture having a strange resemblance to a palace wardrobe. It was an old house: once inhabited, it was said, by the officers of the garrison. It was in the large council room—so it was told—that the first officers of the settlement burnt the early records of the colony, and the Governor was found dead in his chair.¹

¹ Captain Collins: first Governor, Bonwick.

A whinny greeted Sir William's beast as, opening a great bolt in the first of the three doors, he led it in and baited it beside a pretty gray with a black mane and a fine, large dapple horse. The stalls were narrow and partitioned off by walls, the place—according to rumour—having once been the quarters of a considerable establishment of assigned servants. It was lit by three port-holes cut in the front wall, which, like that at the back, seemed of basalt or dark freestone, and built into the latter, the partitions, each with its cap of wood, ran away in dim rotation into gloom.

Changing to a pair of highlows, Heans arranged his horse's bed. He was thus engaged when a light fluttered in on the walls, and a young girl stood in the door with a lantern. She had a hand over her eyes, which were almost entirely shut as if blind, and blinked weakly as she peered into the stall. She wore a gray dress with a cape, and a small black apron. Her soft amber hair was parted flat on her head, which she carried slightly bowed, as if with constant groping through the mist of those poor restless windows. Her face, with its trembling lids, expressed the words "serene music."

She put the lamp down by the door, and said it was late, and his supper was in his room. She added that she had fed and watered "Jan and Vesta." Her voice had a natural unquiet, yet withal a sort of echo of precision. Sir William thanked her rather brusquely. He was brushing his animal down with great nicety, and seemed hardly to hear what she said.

She watched him in a serene way, while he concluded his task. The lantern threw its beams about the lengthy place, showing the stalls like walls in a dream, and the high back rock scarred here and there with hieroglyphics. Just above the dapple cob had been cut the bust of a man in cocked hat and epaulettes, and further up, under a great crack splitting the wall across, were the rude letters—

STONE HIM TO DEATH

Below these, on a level with the stall walls, was the rough semblance of a clenched fist and arm bound across with a knife, while low on the rear of the stall in which Sir William worked was the rickety announcement: "W's got a BLACK charmer." Cobwebs hung upon these dusty wounds, softening the fierce injunction, mocking the ribald jest with waving threads. Either cut as a pathetic sentiment, or for instruction in the picklock art, was a carving in the far reaches of the stable of a massive prison lock, with bolt shot, having three pieces of steel inserted in the keyhole at different angles, and beside it a key with its handle broken.

The girl shifted the lantern where its light ran further into the

stall and said, as she did so:—"Sir William, Sergeant Morrissett was here this afternoon."

"Morrissett! What was it this time, Miss Abelia?"

"He did not ask to go through the dwelling rooms—I don't think father would have countenanced it."

"Oh, he might and welcome, miss!" said Heans. "Last time he purloined only some letters, of an old relation. They were returned to me—somewhat spilt over and scarred with cigar marks—but, after all, given back. Ah, ah, my dear, so they've been bothering you in my absence!"

"Sir, there is no reason for anxiety." (She spoke her mind in a precise, even, blinking way.) "If Mr. Daunt was your enemy, Sir William, for what reason could he want the 'big room'?"

"What, they're not going to quarter police in the chamber!"

"Oh no, Sir William; on Friday there's to be a grand ball. They want to hire the room, because of the size and the carved cornice. They have been flattering father. Mr. Daunt when he was here in September asked what was in that part of the house, and when father took him through the room, he said something about its being 'made for a reception.' I heard father say, he'd heard Governor Collins had been found dead there, and Mr. Daunt answering, 'Nothing so famous, I'm afraid; it happened in another house called Regent's Villa.'"

"Ah, most faithful reporter," panted Heans; "it is Daunt's very voice and greedy heart. That would be too valuable a piece of history for your father to possess. Daunt will have the Governor die appropriately in a house of his own naming. How do you know, pray, it is the Superintendent who wants it?"

"Mr. Morrissett told me so. Mr. Daunt thought the old room would be curious to her ladyship. It is a farewell party for the Lady Franklin herself, who is leaving with her husband to explore the swamps and snow-mountains between here and Macquarie Harbour. The gentlemen are so charmed with her intrepidity."

"So that was his reason, Miss Abelia?"

"Oh sir, I don't know that he is such a provoking gentleman! But he seems to anger you, sir, and you are never so very hasty. I have noticed certain things: for instance, he will nearly always accept an advantage from anyone, however little it is, and however lowly they're situated. He doesn't seem to be able to resist doing so. Then, though he seems just and scrupulous, he is stern in his profession. I think—he likes overlooking his prisoners. Father says his mind is on you too much—as if you were the place of a crime he had committed."

A woman's voice called "Abelia" from the house. The girl turned and groped back into the yard. "Oh, see, sir, there is a light now in the great room!" said she. "There are some gentlemen in the window in uniform——"

Sir William strode in his highlows out of the stall, and stood beside her. A lit door was open on the right of the house and a woman stood there. Some ladies and gentlemen were also visible in a pair of windows—candle-lit—on the extreme left. Lit as the windows were, the figures and faces stood out but softly—a number of ladies and six or seven men. A single female sat talking with an officer near the glass, her head a little turned aside and her hand under her chin. She was pale, and though the wings of her bonnet hid all but her nose and cheek, Heans recognised her, saying in a sharp voice, "By Heaven, I know the lady in the window!"

Abelia gave him one quiet, fluttering glance. She then made across the yard in her wavering, half-blind way. As she did so, a door opened in the great room, and a second candle shone into the yard. Three men were gathered dimly in it, and the voice of one harshed hollowly across the court: "These are the stables where the lantern is—very extensive." They stepped, as he spoke, into the yard, and advanced slowly across, their sabres tapping the flags.

Sir William moved from the stable-door and went into a smaller cavern on the right where he kept his brushes and accoutrements. As he went in he heard Abelia's voice rising in answer to someone's in the yard. She said, with a quavering distinctness: "The door where the light stands." Sir William stepped further into the dark, and touching some bags of chaff, sat down on one of them.

The men came into the stable, talking loudly. "How can a woman judge!" said a high, excited voice. "It would seem they are either all mercy or all severity."

"For every young woman willing to learn," came a downright answer, "my dear fellow, there are fifty mad to teach—and these, as stands to reason, the more ignorant."

"Hullo—the old fellow's got a regular mews, here!" said a third voice, with a hoarse chuckle. "Did Daunt tell you he's been a prisoner, and don't care who knows it? Always hauling it into the talk. Fantastical chap. 'Oh, I'm a free man now,' says he, 'and risen, as they call it.'"

"Shist! He may have a fellow here, somewhere. Mind what you say."

"That the daughter—the girl that passed us?"

"Yes."

"Something about her like a child I've seen—oh, I know, riding with a prisoner called Heans. I used to be interested in that man. He was a bit of an architect, and quite a nice fellow for a prisoner. Got the gambling virus, and did a wonderful escape the very day after he'd been at my house. Daunt, there, caught him at Spring Bay, not a mile from the schooner. Very sly, he was, keeping it dark. He's a farm servant now at New Town—he, a capital top-sawyer of a fellow."

"Why that man, Heans, is a groom somewhere in the town—so Somers informed me."

"No—no, Daunt said his punishment was a sinecure—got him through Sir John or somebody interfering with the proper course of the law! You know how Daunt goes on where Sir John is concerned."

"Well, Garion told me Daunt himself put him with an emancipist."¹

"Eh! that's bad. I can't imagine him so diminished. No doubt Daunt's having him watched. I like Daunt in private life—I like some of the things I've seen him do—things for a friend—but, d—n it, I don't know that I'd care to be in his hands! He had a hate for that man—above his mere scepticism of the bailiff."

"Of course, Kent and I are new comers here, Shaxton, but we heard Daunt and his prisoner fell out over some officer's wife. It's hard to see Daunt heart-struck on a woman!"

"What—ho-ho—who spread that?"

"It's common talk. *On dit*, leaked out through a maid-servant. She caught them at blows in the lady's drawing-room."

"Who said that?"

"Beal told me that. . . But I heard Daunt himself say, in a discussion on women, that the woman in a certain case was so infatuated she acted as go-between for a prisoner and a schooner captain. Yes—dropping her husband's money from a fly in a by-street. And when Beal taxed him with its being the same woman, he said, 'You're the very devil himself, Beal!' Mind, I don't think Daunt's quite the thing. I mean, I think he's one of those men who doesn't realise how much he guides himself by the letter. He thinks he can act a man-of-honour and think a cad. Look at the things he says. I've known him go on like a mean woman. These fellows are dangerous, Captain Shaxton. The letter's nothing but a fine uniform when your passions become involved. Any day they are liable to slop over into some satanic tyranny."

"Why—d—n it! you'd make a villain of old Daunt! I never saw a man with such an obstinate sense of right. Do you know that fellow spent a week cross-examining a prisoner before he'd flog him—and that with Magruder against him! There was that case of Welland. Ho, there's a name!"

"Ah, you're a loyal fellow, Shaxton! I request your pardon if I've said anything against a friend."

"A friend! Ho-ho, Daunt's a crotchety fellow! No, I don't say that. Lord, what a devil of a lark! Now, I'll tell you—I know that woman. I've heard of that affair with Heans. But you don't mean to say she used her husband's money?"

¹ Freed prisoner.

"Come, Shaxton," put in the younger man, pursing his lips and wriggling his shoulders as he turned away, "let us go back to the ladies. These stalls will do." He stalked slowly to the door as he spoke.

"Why, Shaxton," said the other, staring at him earnestly, "I hope I haven't offended you."

The younger man, without turning from the door, where he was now looking out with arms folded, said easily enough: "Some one is coming across, sir. Swords, sir. It is the Commandant of foot-police himself, I think."

Shaxton, modulating his voice a little, was simulating a kind of wild badinage. "What—ho-ho—this is good as *Galigani's*! Now, Karne, did he spread that—let that go, I mean—about the woman? I mean, did Daunt really tell it that way? Now I want to know the truth, for a reason, yes. I thought I knew what happened on that occasion. I may be able to correct you."

"Me! Shaxton, I swear, on my soul, he let the thing pass! You wouldn't accuse me of speaking like a cad about a man. Watch him when he comes in now, how wary—how stern and definite he will be. That was how he spoke, touching the table nicely with his fingers. It was obvious what he meant. Why should I, for this once, suppose he had no double meaning!"

"Tell ye what," said Shaxton, "ho-ho—have you any objection to my asking him?" (In a fierce chuckling whisper) "I'll bet ye a fiver—here you are, Captain Karne—a fiver it wasn't true about that girl. She'd never," he added, *sotto voce*, as steps were heard, "she'd never do a trick like that."

Karne had his elbow on the stall wall, and was trying to laugh away his irritation as he looked towards the door. The horses rattled up their running-chains.

Steps and a sabre echoed in the yard, and a man in a cocked hat appeared in the light, backed by two faces in gray stove-pipes. He was talking rather drowsily, but his stout, short, flattish face was alert and grave. His over-thick, bristly black hair was cut short like his side-whiskers, and greying where it sprouted from his temples. He wore a white overcoat buttoned across his uniform, the sleeves hanging empty, and carried a sword in a small white hand. Moreover, his stern eyes were dark and tired.

The three men turned in, chorusing in a high indifferent manner some surprise at the fittings and features of the shadowy place. The two last in black, a young man with a red chin-beard, and a yellow-haired, high coloured little gentleman with a strong horse face, wore single-breasted frock-coats of almost pea-jacket length, velvet of cuffs and collars, the severity of which was qualified in the second instance by a buff waistcoat, and in the first by a green cravat tied in the large new bow.

"Ha!" said the red-faced gentleman, showing his strong teeth

in an apologetic yawn, "an opportune ~~size~~. Been stealing some plums, Shaxton, for that model prison of yours?"

"I?" said Shaxton, glancing up at the cliff, yet continuing to thrust at a hole in the stall-wall with his sword-hilt. "Ho-ho, it's you, Sturt! No, this wouldn't do for the Port Arthur people. Give us credit for fires and ventilation!"

"Shaxton's is a moral place—in the form of a cross," said Daunt, who had advanced in, looking indifferently about him, but now was eyeing Shaxton with a keen and curious expression. "With Leete of the Cascades to cut the stone out" (he looked up at the wall, now addressing Shaxton) "and such places as this, as blundering examples, you should raise a monument to solitude at Port Arthur."

"Yes, that's good," approved Shaxton, giving a grunting laugh, but not turning. "And none knows better than you what we're attempting. As Binifield said, why should we degrade ourselves by whipping these harebrained fellers? They abscond and abscond. They are apprehended, read encouragement in another's eye, and again endanger the safety of the settlements with their cunning. This is an attempt to let their own brains punish 'em."

Daunt continued to examine Shaxton. He detected, evidently an unusual note in his tone, while the sharpish smile of Karne, swinging wide-legged, hands behind back, against the stall-end, invested both men with a suggestion of constraint. He suddenly turned his full steady stare upon the latter, saying rather sharply and in a peculiar, questioning manner, "I've seen you before, sir?" It was with him a favourite method of human approach, invented possibly for use among the criminal. Even among the free it was invariably taken as a statement. In the present case the officer approached, smiled angrily, stammering, "Yes—yes, I've had the honour of meeting you several times. My name's Karne."

At that moment the red-faced gentleman drew attention to the hieroglyphics on the wall, announcing that some "old-timer" had been emphasizing his sentiments in the stone. "Slash," says he, buttonholing his companion, "read it, Slash. Is that first letter a B or a W?"

"I make two letters of it," said the man with the red beard. "Stone him to death," he spelt out, in a tone fallen rather hoarse.

"Ah," says the red-faced gentleman, "and what would you have dealt out to that ruffian, Mr. Commandant?"

Daunt's face looked up wooden and stern. "This was mere bravado," he muttered, with a slight smile of politeness, "done in a night, no doubt, by three or four men. Such publishings of hate are meat and drink to those who cannot nurse their grievances, and would not much increase the unhappiness of the officer who walked, as he knew, with his life in his hand.

Shaxton, here, believes all this natural hate is to be stilled by a dose of 'silence.' Well and good! We prison people, however, cling to bodily punishment—degrading as it is to punisher. The prisoner's brain's a variable engine. We learn early just how much to tamper with it. Shaxton steps in with a whole gallery of masks and slipped warders over a bit of flooring that would sink me."

"Ho-ho," chuckled Shaxton. "I must laugh at you, Mr. Superintendent. When you're angry you're so good-tempered. Like the lady in the play—so 'precise' even when you're presuming. Say at once we're building a Bedlam."

"I do," said Daunt, with a cold and expressionless certainty, "and for the very brain you want to punish: the brain that feeds on society."

Shaxton gave up his play with the wall, and, giggling a little, faced round with his shoulder against it.

"Well, I know you," he said, looking at Daunt and smiling, his face rather yellow. "You're right, you think, and so you'll say it. The place is to be put into being. There's no stopping it now. Heavens! I'm tired of it. They've had me stuck down to details like a fly on a pin. You saw the first plans, didn't you: you and Shelstone? It was Heans—a convict—elevated it; and we all attended that night. What's become of that fellow since his skedaddle? These fellows—Karne here—tell me you've got a fine old story about a woman in the case?"

"Oh, come now, Shaxton!" laughed the officer known as Kent.

"I was present at Wellington Crescent, sir," said Karne, folding his arms and staring downwards, "when you were discussing with Beal the infatuation of certain women with prisoners. You remember you left it open to conclude a certain officer's lady had helped the convict with her husband's money?"

Daunt gave the speaker a sort of pondering glare, never glancing at Shaxton.

"You young hell-rake!" he broke out, laughing loudly, yet frankly crestfallen. "Very well done—ha, ha! I shall have a nice name! You mustn't go watching me over the wine-glass. Jack's not satisfied with my entertainment; he must have a quiz at the sit of my cravat." (He looked round with his rueful laugh.) "He's peeping under the table, all the while we're hobnobbing, measuring the indifferent style of my pantaloons! By all the laws of friendship, what have you caught me saying? Named no lady, I hope!"

"Karne's joking," said the red-faced gentleman, with an immense grin.

"No, sir," said Karne, somewhat wildly. "Certainly you named no lady."

"Was it true though, about that woman?" asked Shaxton, hoarsely chuckling with the others.

Daunt swung a little towards his questioner, his hand on his chin, his brow slightly knitted over the ghost of a hardening smile. Their eyes met, and Shaxton dropped his, lifting and tapping his sword as he leant against the wall.

"I'll be perfectly candid with you, Shaxton," said Daunt, with a sudden deepening to official weariness. "The police, in this case, had knowledge of a package dropped from a carriage by this woman, and picked up by a discredited gambler who, immediately becoming possessed of funds, purchased and fitted out the old Government schooner in which Heans tried to effect his escape. The carriage-hood was up, and in throwing back the package, a tassel of the lady's shawl became caught in the hood-spring, attracting the driver; who seeing something in the road, would have stopped, had not the lady bidden him somewhat hastily to get on. This crossing his suspicions, caused him to look back at the bottom of the street, where he caught the Captain lifting the package. When we advertised for information concerning the escaped schooner, the hackneyman brought in the story."

A sudden heave of the shoulders and Shaxton pushed himself from the partition. With much chuckling and a very pale ugly ironical countenance, he caught Daunt's arm, staring up into his quiet hardening face. "Well, look there now!" he cried as if lost in the story's scandalous interest, "and didn't you say the very money was her husband's?"

The other shifted back a precise, cold step.

"To be properly honest with you, Shaxton," he said, with a stern swiftness, "I concluded so. We knew one of the men was indigent, and the convict—then allowed a small remittance from the Crown—had been punting openly."

"Upon my oath," chuckled the other, turning away with a sort of slow jocularly, "I thought I knew that woman! I'm a worldly sort, but I don't go these depths. If I was to tell you gentlemen that I believed it true, you'd call it an amazing tale. I'm sure you would—ho-ho! Mind, she had a leaning for him not only! She must give the cadging beast the money—the money of the—ho-ho—the money of the cheerful piece—her husband! Here's a prisoner of good family—tchic, tchic!—a baronet of breeding, drags the poor soul into the kennel beside him, and bares her silly bosom, that would have harboured him, to this and that man's mud. I—I feel this." (He strode to the door into the yard, slurring his words.) "You remember, Mr. Gentleman Superintendent, I opened my door to him!" he shouted. "My God—my God—the poor little witch! I thought it was one of our Mothers of Patience!"

The gentlemen exchanged discomfited glances.

"Speaking frankly," said Daunt, with a hoarse droop in his

voice, as he turned after Shaxton, "I can't forgive myself for letting the prisoner into a gentleman's house. We police see so much ugly depravity, we lose our sense of vigilance before the filbert-nailed criminal. But I admit—well—it was a case in which I was to blame, Shaxton, for a piece of bitter weakness: an old matter of belief in women."

"Ah, I know that," said Shaxton, rounding by the lantern and pushing it aside with his wellington. "Lucky beggar—you never need to believe in anything. But you musn't go saying these things—you've got a reputation to keep up. I stick by the Superintendent—don't I, Karne?" He looked up, chuckling whimsically, and Karne barked an ambiguous—

"Indeed, indeed, sir," amid a negative laugh of relief.

In the midst of it, a crash as from a falling chain startled the company, and Sir William Heans stooped into the light, feeling his way slowly with his hand round the side of the arch leading from the harness-cave. He had removed his highlows, and held an amber-headed cane and a black top-hat in his left hand. In their surprise, the gentlemen, who had been moving doorwards, slowed to a halt, and Shaxton, whipping up the lantern from the floor, shot the light on the moving figure.

Under his hair, somewhat deranged and streaked upon his forehead, his face looked thin, puffed, and grey of cheek, and his plaid legs stepped out in a slow, cramped, and painstaking manner. He stopped in the arch, somewhat dazzled by the lantern, but staring at Shaxton, who with a strange hard cry suddenly dropped the light a foot and then again tremblingly raised it.

"Shaxton—you know me," Heans said.

"Heans," said the other, thickly.

"I am not happily known to these gentlemen." (He bowed three shivering angry bows.) "I heard what has been said. I couldn't allow this to go on, for the sake of the woman you have been discussing. I am as worldly a man as any here, and if she had been a bad woman, you understand me when I say I should not have faced you." (His quickened breaths cut for an instant through the caves.) "If she had done what Mr. Daunt credits her with doing—taken her husband's money to help me—Sir William Heans—there would have been no need for this. I am such a fellow as that. I would have remained in that place" (He motioned back with his hat in a kind of choked silence), "till these gentlemen had gone—till you had done—you, Captain Shaxton, and you" (he looked at Daunt), "who dismiss your prisoner's feelings—grooms and what not—and arrange your soirées with so rough a conscience."

The gentlemen—still struck aback—stood staring in a kind of sour nonchalance—Sturt's horse face with a faint point of encouragement; Daunt somewhat negative and distressed.

"'Pon my life, sir," muttered Karne, with a reddish counten-

ance, "might have given us a hint, sir! Didn't dream the man we were discussing was in engagement here!"

"Indeed, I must apologise," said Daunt, wearily enough. "I am confronted by these people, every hour of the day. It depends on their conduct. I cannot allow one to be more important than another."

Shaxton's voice wheezed out: "Oh, come, now, you knew that I and my wife had known him."

"Perhaps you will tell me what would become of me," said Daunt, with a little injured laugh, "if I countenanced the social claims of every prisoner in my safe-keeping?"

"'Pon my soul," wheezed Shaxton, "I'll drop this light! I can't stand it to his face Heans now—Heans—Heans—how did you get her to do that?"

Heans made an unmoved, deprecating gesture with his eyeglass—a little pathetically dingy. "Forgive me, Shaxton," he said, "for being material. I have unfinished duties. Do not drop it. . . ."

"Damme, it's heavy, Sir William Heans! I can't hold the thing up for ever."

"I take you, Shaxton," said Sturt, with his brave head up and speaking in a strong cool voice. "You are inclined to be sceptical. Now, I am not. Isn't this in the circumstances the action of one of our gentlemen? If I may put a word in, sir," said he, addressing Heans, "and urging its indelicacy in behalf of the unknown, I should ask you to state exactly how you came by that sum of money?"

"Indeed, my service to you, sir," said Sir William, bowing towards the speaker in some confusion and sadness. "I can correct Captain Shaxton if he is still sceptical about the fair incognita. It took the entreaties of myself, green to the place and desperate, to persuade her to take my money and drop it from her barouche. When the police deprived me of my effects on landing, they had passed and returned to me my handkerchiefs, among which were some notes concealed in a perfume-pad. At first I put these aside with a view to escaping. In the end, however, I played away and was cheated of twenty pounds. The remainder—after my friend and I had by a miracle evaded Mr. Daunt—I hid in a box of Tunbridge-ware, having a picture of the Pantiles on the lid, in this woman's house, and she at my begging entreaty, and because of the horror she had for my situation, at the mercy, as I was, of certain unscrupulous persons beneath my station, removed them and cast them into the hands of my friend at the top of Davey Street."

"Ah yes—yes," said Daunt, removing a cheroot which he had just lighted, and staring at Heans rather dark-humouredly, "that is true. Certainly I was on his track."

"Ah, sir, you approve of me!" said Heans, tossing his glass icily.

"Steady now," said Kent.

"I know you for a man who will cut any number of capers," said the Superintendent, with an ugly sternness. "You would not ask me to approve."

Hereupon Shaxton—who seemed to have recovered from his first shocking pallor at the sight of Heans—lowered his lantern, and stepping back, button-holed the Superintendent with a remarkable and clumsy freedom. "I—ho-ho—" he said, bending and staring in the other's eyes with a giggling, ironical smile, "I ask you to approve."

Daunt, seemingly jealous for his privacy, and much ashamed of the business, here pulled away, rather protestingly staring into the other's baleful eyes. "Shaxton," he said, with a sudden little smile and nod, "you may command even the police, and call us careless. We will pass the pad for you and Heans' rash incognita with pleasure."

"Bravo—bravo," said the gentleman with the red chin-beard. Sturt stared inquiringly from one to the other, his face a brave question. Sir William looked for an instant in deadly earnest. "An acknowledgment of mistake, I give you my honour!" Karne was heard to mutter.

Shaxton dropped Daunt's coat, while his chuckling eye flashed laughingly away and laughingly back. The lamp swung in his hand, and he continued to giggle menacingly between his depressed and drooping lips. "Ho-ho," he said, his eyes again on the other's, "you must allow me to protect the woman! It's rather funny of you, Superintendent. So help me G—d, I thought you were devoted to her! Weren't you—you won't mind my saying it?—weren't you constantly in her drawing-room when I was present?"

"True," said Daunt, staring palely at the other, "the foolish girl certainly had her day of lionizing."

"I swear before G—d, I thought you set up for a sort of guardian of her," Shaxton chuckled, approaching a fraction closer. "Chedsey, or is it Beal? has a tale about your having a heroic set-to with Heans, there, in her husband's room?"

"Yes, I attempted to protect her name," said Daunt, lifting his head a little proudly and sourly. "We all have our heroic moment about the women."

At once Heans, who, leaning with his right hand against the wall, and looking down, had listened to the labelling of his character, uncaring, if with a vexed and wearying air, whipped out in a burdened ill-held voice: "What incident is this which has broken your belief in the unknown?"

The Superintendent raised his eyes to the prisoner, with the question: "You will continue to connect yourself with her—and her reputation?" while Shaxton, yet chuckling, stared back over his shoulder into Heans' face. A blanched stare took Heans, like a reflection of the latter's unseen eyes. He picked suddenly at the stones with his riding-cane.

Shaxton flashed back at Daunt. "She was struck on you, too," he went on, as if there had been no interruption; "I think this very sour of you, Superintendent. You want a better bile. You're rather cynical—aren't you! Here you are squeezing her through—for a friend—with a lavender pad! Poor piece!" (He smiled malignly at the Superintendent who, for some seconds, stared or glared at him.) "Come, gentlemen," he added, hoarsely, "we must get back to the ladies." (The shadows leapt as he turned doorwards.) "Bah! it reminds me of the old woman who regretted she had not married a watchman, as he had his lantern in everybody's yard. Dash it, before I went for any one, if I was in the habit of rooting in refuse with it, I'd wipe my weapon!"

Raising the lantern, he again squared round by the door, and stood staring back at Heans. The others stopped rather protestingly: Daunt, as it happened, in sombre, nodding expostulation with Sturt. "There you are, Heans," sighed the Captain, ruefully; "all the possible virtues still—eh? It's a strange world! 'Pon honour, I hope you're comfortable in it—not too much against you! Why now—have you still that pad in your possession?"

Sir William's eyes flashed at the other, and he half turned away as if he would return into the cave, pushing back, however, with a quick, cramped effort. "Indeed, sir, I have not," he said, shaking in an agitated way the frayed ribbon of his glass as if he would have slightly snubbed the other; "it is in the possession of a Mrs. Quaid, from whom I had rooms, at No 5, B—— Street. She was a selfish, bothersome, anxious person, and would no doubt have retained it. Indeed, I may say, she was so much impressed by the story that it had been embroidered by an acquaintance of my own, a lady of title, that, when leaving, I bestowed it upon her that she might be easy in her mind, at least, about my *ton*." (Here Heans, with a slight grey laugh, put his eyeglass to his eye.) "Do me the kindness, Captain Shaxton, should you call and examine the scent-pad for the purpose of assuring yourself against a baseless aspersion—do me the honour to obtain at my expense—I have an old ring here which I am sure she will accept—some volumes of Plutarch's Lives of the Ancients in her possession, the study of which I have missed sadly since I have been in assignment here."

Shaxton, striding across half-jovially, half-malignly, wheezed, "Yes, I'll do it—yes, poor Heans. You don't mean to say the old hussy deprived you of 'em!" and clasped carelessly the ring which Sir William thrust into his hand. At the same moment Captain Sturt stepped over and offered the prisoner some choice Orinoco tobacco from a silver box.

"In bargaining as to price," continued Sir William, bowing and dipping in his hand in an abrupt manner, "she wanted a shilling more than I could reasonably expend. So agreeable in you to oblige me, Mr. Shaxton, and you, sir—in a stranger too.

Pray give my respects to the poor woman. The fellow with the books will find me, here, in Oughtryn's house! (He nodded here and there, suddenly broken in spirit and rather ghastly pale.) "I ask permission," he added, "to remind you I have some duties yet unfinished." And before any one could speak, he whipped on his hat, and turned very quickly away into the arch. Perhaps to lessen the impression of sadness left by his stumbling shadow, Daunt, of the police, called after him in a hoarse, leisurely voice, "Very good hit, sir—very good hit!" And as he put the gentlemen through the door, he glanced slowly about the stable, up at the walls, and at the legend: "Stone him to death."

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER BLACK STRING

OUTSIDE the stable, Daunt, despite Sir William's request for polite reading, took a piece of yellow chalk from his uniform, and marked round the bolt of the upper door with it. Inside, there was Heans, satisfied, no doubt, that he had capped an impression of resignation to stables, and Mr. Oughtryn's service, by his mild fever for the lost classic, which the cynical officer seems to have treated rather as if a proud and incorrigible prisoner, having handed over all his belongings to those about him, now demanded only, for a more perfect peace, one little bunch of violets to sniff.

One of the gentlemen, moving across the yard, rather urgently hailed the Commandant, and catching up his sword, he departed, brushing and flipping the chalk from his fingers. It was Captain Sturt.

"Hope there was nothing wrong in my offering the poor fellow tobacco," said he; ranging up and eyeing his preoccupied face.

"No, you did quite right," said Daunt; "they get little enough of that kind. In any case I am like enough to have trouble with him after this—bless his mercurial ecstasies!"

"Most interesting. I'm afraid you mean you're sceptical about his gentility!"

"Not of its endurance, but of its honesty. That man will fight me with it as long as he can scrape a satin stock together. I leave a visitor like you, sir, to allow himself the luxury of being moved by him—to offer him your kindness—while I observe how much he is keeping as a hostage for a future life of gentility here, what sort of a practical notion he has of settling down on the tags and tatters he's clinging to—as against those he's lavish with as he's been to-night."

"Pitching too much ballast overboard for a prisoner, eh?"

"Most fine and magnanimous, isn't that the word? It's wonderful how long they keep it up—almost as if it were part of the blood. But piecing together his careless manner about the

lady, and himself, and to me, I am about to keep my eye, for a week or so, about the back gate here. These are technical horrors, Captain Sturt—pray forget them!"

* * * *

To retrace our steps, a second and no less curious accident had happened to Sir William¹ when hiding in the harness-cave. When, to avoid the officers, he had returned in among the chaff-sacks, in feeling about him, his shoulder had struck a heavy chain pendant from the two smaller ends of the place, used for suspending the spare sacks and horse-rugs, and in thrusting up his hand to stay the rattle of the slack, it had encountered, not the chain only, but a place of juncture where it ceased, and its last link was upheld by a double greasy leather thong (resembling those used by prisoners for tricing up their anklets) to some moving substance against the back wall. Now what brought Sir William to return to this again, even after his tragic encounter with the gentlemen, was this, that while he sat upon an upright sack near the wall, with his hand still upon the thong, stilling the swinging chain, his arm beginning to tremble in agitation as he heard what was said, he was confused by the sudden "jingle" of a lighter chain, inside the wall, and somewhere above his head. More than once, while the chain still swung, and he durst not remove his hand, he heard distinctly the steady "tinkling" of this other in some crevice of the wall. But what had specially roused his curiosity, was that it had the iron "jangle" of the ankle-chains of the road-gangs, known to his ear,¹ and for one foolish moment—before he realised that it was connected with the thongs on which he had his hand—he had a fancy there was a convict up there concealed in a hole. It gave him quite a turn.

We have said the horses were attached by running-chains to the mangers, and the occasional rattle, no doubt, prevented the gentlemen from being attracted by the other. When Heans had forgotten all this, and jerked himself up by the thong to go out and meet the gentlemen, the whole erection whipped up, the chain in the cave rattling, and the gyve—if that it were—lashing the stones in its prison in the wall.

It was some time after the yard had ceased to echo with the visitors' swords and wellingtons, that he came out and took in the lantern. Having coated the beasts, he returned, and with the lantern in his hand, was about to leave, when, being interested in the extraordinary way the sack-chain was secured, he once more shook it into voice, holding up the light, and eyeing the wall with it. He saw that it was split by two heavy cracks, each about the width of an elephant's leg, and running obliquely to the roof like those in the stable. While one crossed the corner of the wall high up, the other began about five feet from

¹ The chain makes a deep sound in concussion with the anklet.

the floor, making at a sharp angle for the other side. Strolling inward, he ran his glove along the chain, and, where it ended, the black thongs, pressing in till he came under the higher of the two cracks, out of which, as he now saw, they hung. He became very curious. Pulling himself up upon a sack, he stared up the crack after the strings, but could not see the end of them. He now lifted and held up the lantern. The strings ran, it seemed, to the very socket of a narrowing fissure, but he could see no chain or sign of one. Again he pulled them sharply and heard the hidden iron ring in some stony crevice. There was plainly a second chain hidden up in the wall; and, fetter or what not, how had it come there?

He could make little of it, and at the moment, as it happened, cared not enough to enquire further. It seemed out of the question that a man, even with the arm of an Ourang, could have jammed a pair of irons so far within the wall. Nay, an urchin could not have swarmed up the crack far enough to fix them. Heans climbed down and examined the thongs. They were of leather, black with age or dust, and carefully knotted—the knots being flattened as with friction and somewhat greasy and evil-smelling. Where they met the cable-chain, they were not attached, but passed through an end link and upward without a knot. Once more—this time with both hands—Heans had given the chain a heavy pull, and harkened till the noise ceased. On a sudden he stilled the quivering thongs. It had occurred to him that they might still be attached to dead legs.

His mind, as we have seen, was only half in that matter, and at length he left the lantern in the place and went and stood at the door into the yard. Other things were exercising his thoughts. The two windows of the large room were still candle-lit, and he saw someone standing alone there with head bent, and hands on a table. He knew from the hang of her back and head it was Abelia. From a reflected glow in his bedroom window, he saw there was unwonted light in his passage. He listened. There was a muffled "gurr" of conversation. They had not yet departed. The visitors were still somewhere in the house—possibly on a search for waiting-rooms. As if in answer to his query, a military cloak moved in the end window of the chamber, while a shrill volume of conversation told that some persons were still congregated in its doors into the main passage. The latter was disclosed to him, both back and front doors being now open. It was broad and roomy and lit half-way down by a double oil-lamp not much brighter than the moonlit garden at the other end. He made out, or thought he made out, a man standing in the garden in a cocked hat. But this might have been a bush or tree.

That restless officer in the window kept snatching at his cloak, and the hum of conversation proved it was no breeze that did it by bursting into a high laugh. Blind Abelia might have been

reading alone from a book on the table. Two fingers of moonlight had shot into the yard over the eastern roof. Now that the moon had reached the yard, the figure by the front door was not so easily to be made out. Had the motionless fellow left the garden!

Oughtryn's shrill voice is heard suddenly in the great room, and the windy rumours of conversation break into a ripple. All at once Abelia's constrained figure curtsies, and her shy head is smiling, nodding, and blinking. Heans sees her grope across the room, and out across the dim passage. By the light in the hall she has left open the opposite door. Now a piano tinkles shrill and dim, and suddenly the great room has people laughing and dancing in it. "Tang—tang—tinkle—tang, tang—tang—tinkle—tang." The old house lit and peopled after many years—the old deserted, dumb, black place—where once the King's representative had court, and died with a secret on his widening lips! Only yesterday, Oughtryn was asking: "Where are the notables and little ladies, now!"

Something had frightened them all away. And here they were back again, tripping over what grim stain—sporting with what new-old tragedy! Was the old place clean? Those years of emptiness and obscurity—had they served to cleanse it?

Bring your silken dusters, little ladies!

With a sigh, Heans put on an old cloak, and taking up the lantern, walked sadly along past the horses, and held it over against the carving of the prison lock, and the largest of the two great fissures in the stable wall. This mammoth crack, springing in the last or ninth stall, was wider than those in the other cave, and split the back wall almost in half, vanishing into the rocks of the ceiling about a fathom from the harness-room. Had some maddened, and care-nothing old-timer wriggled up for a wager—or a crime—or some insane hope—or injury—up the great fissure, and got stuck in some cul-de-sac above the harness-room, where the great crack junctured with that of the strings! Who had fed him? Who had kept his trap a secret? Who had tied his fetter-strings to the chain? Who had forsaken him at last in his crack of doom? Had no one heard the whispers begging in the stones?

Why? It was a singular place for a chain to be!

Awful to think some tide of human flotsam had wrestled up those cold rocks and fallen away—all but its iron and bones!

Heans swung the lantern down, arresting it for an instant on the hewn image in the cocked hat, and the letters "Stone him to death." For whom was this dooming? Him they found in the chair in the ball-room there? Or another whose sepulchre these rocks became? Strange if the doomer cut his own: "Stone him to death."

Hark! Music! "Tang—tang—tinkle—tang," and the soft thunder of boots, swords, and voices! The old house sounds

hoarse! Grim old house! not clean yet—not clean yet! Who is it has started the music here? Who brings poor man and woman together? Who is the new dance-master—whose stern swift fingers are on those keys? Who will arrange a meeting for two who were old lovers once—or a hand-fast with her husband, once your friend! Is it another cutting wicked dooms, and this time as a grace to his own image! Is it good will or ill will? Is it a good spirit or a practiser? Is Fate dragging him reluctant, or has he put out his knife and carved another boding on her stony face?

Sir William spat and blew out the lantern.

He picked his way back to the entrance. When near the door, he started back into the dark, but staring. Mrs. Shaxton was in the hall—Matilda Shaxton, beautiful as a lily, but a flushed lily, and a much thinner woman. There was a man there listening to the music with her, a man with black-grey hair. He had his back to the yard and seemed to be pointing out the beauty of the entablement, and widening his arms to the width of the doorway. She did not seem happy in his company, for he said a smiling something in answer to her, from which she shrank with an evasive feminine shrinking. Suddenly he bowed and strode out of the front door. He wore a cocked hat. Heans saw that it was Daunt. Sir William was not certain whether Daunt had taken his leave, or waited crying back some polite cry from the garden.

Poor Mrs. Shaxton seemed uneasy, and looked out at the front and back into the yard. Heans had the horrid thought that she was still under the gossip of that man who was growing older and—for so stern a man—loose. Sir William knew from two spirit-stilling interviews how ugly this playful mood of Daunt could be. He was troubled for Matilda Shaxton.

There was something threatening in the *ennui* of this stern and bitter man. Sir William, in his exaggerating, over-angry mood, had likened him, to-night, to some fine reptile, which had stung its way to supremacy, and languid with success, was half-inclined to put its fang aside—yet could not refrain from stinging the boobies, and wanting yet some drawing-room weapon for common defence. Perhaps, Sir William knew him better than those gentlemen. Yet Sir William, from the moment of their first meeting, had nursed a dislike for Daunt, and with a mind unhinged by real or fancied wrongs, had not undermagnified the change in his warder. The prisoner—it may be told—had imagined his jailer's mood of tolerance unpleasantly mischievous, and as wide for himself as for the world. Now that he had got there, this man, said Heans, is not really interested in a position of eminence. It crosses him to aim fine and kindly, without change, praise, or cessation; and if he must put a sheath on that venomous instrument, his tongue (always phonetically right), the good folk, to whose level he had won, must permit him, for sheer

boredom, to wear it in his cheek. "Surely," he could see him say, "that will be sufficient homage to stupidity!" That seemed his half-weary, half-laughing attitude. Yes, the man is dropping his guard (still speaks Sir William's hate and anguish), and while doing so, is letting go his stern self-discipline. There he lies, wallowing in the trough, an ugly and sly craft, shockingly efficient, and unable yet to discard his sinister excess.

It was told that two young ladies, polking together, had been relating how gallant had been the conduct of a prisoner out in the stable in behalf of a certain unknown woman, and poor Matilda, dancing by, had overheard the title, "Sir Somebody Lane." Being curious, she asked her partner if that was the name of the prisoner; and he corrected her, putting her right.

She had at length excused herself and crept into the hall alone; and there, moving out too, was the Commandant of foot-police, who, perhaps seeing her disquiet, or because, as we understand, there had been already some slight coolness between them, had very coldly and briefly pointed out the beauty of the architrave and the doorway. She had not seen him for a matter of months, and she looked as keenly as she could at him to discover if it was the same Mr. Daunt, who had made, it seems, some mistake—quite an old story between them. After a second's scrutiny, she said, in a rather silly, laughing way—her voice sharp: "How clever of you, sir, to have discovered a house with a ghost in it!"

But he kept his face away, himself laughing half-ruefully and shrugging his shoulders. "Oh, you've heard of the ghost?" he said, rather indirectly. "Would you like to see it, madam? Shall we resurrect it for you? I never know whether you ladies are serious or laughing!" (He looked tired, and smothered a little, involuntary yawn.) "Little to be frightened of," he assured her, "after a period in these obscurities! You will not see it, madam! Ignore it, in your sternest style—look the other way, if it come! Do not let their tales trouble you!"

He bows again in a steady, polite, mirthless, disilluminated way; puts on his hat; and takes his leave. Very abstractedly, and almost a little goutily, he hurries over the threshold.

Presently, alone there, in the hall, she falls on her knees, and presses her two hands into her bonnet. Heans saw her sway, and then roll over and lie there. And the music!

He was hesitating at the hall door, when it filled with fluttering women. There was a sharp scream, and a long, little moan. Sir William moved back into the yard. They had removed her bonnet, and her hair was upon the floor. Captain Shaxton, who, like Mr. Daunt, was just departing, ran back and knelt over her, chuckling her fears away and gently smoothing her face and forehead. And the music ran like a little maiden about the frowning yard—"Tang—tang—tinkle—tang, tang—tang—tinkle—tang,

tang—tang—tinkle—tang, tang—tang—tinkle—tang, tinkle—
tang, tinkle—tang, tinkle—tang, tang—tang—tinkle—tang, tinkle
—tinkle—tang——”

CHAPTER VI

BLIND ABELIA SEES SOMETHING

HEANS, from his breakfast-room window, saw Abelia searching for flowers among the bushes with trembling hands. Her grey figure, tight of sleeve and bodice, relieved only by white vandyke collar, long black apron, and smooth red head, moved with a blinking serenity along unkempt beds bordered with broken cement; here culling some small creamy thing from a gnarled tree that declaimed with every brandished limb it could ill spare its one rosette; there choosing among little armies of red valerian which fought and beat the grass unaided under a barren rockery.

Thus began for Heans a day pregnant with curious events. It was Sir William Heans' fate in these eventful hours to ask a surprising number of questions, and to have them answered with a remarkable grossness.

The house was built of smallish bricks, with windows and corners of immense uneven stones, curiously alternating in size with a cumbrous attempt at the Academic, and hewn sharp. The long narrow roof was only a few feet high and shorn off at either end without ornament with a stern and laconic expediency. Along the garden's eastern side, a wall of yellow freestone, turning yellow-green, ran from street to cliffs, and after a picturesque and elaborate plan darted up the latter, being breached about ten yards over the summit by an arch having a white door now fallen aside. Propped against this, the west wall, and the house-front, were several pieces of rude sculpture hewn from the same stone. Among these were two immense acorns and several of those curious pieces of architecture known as modillions. An immense ball of the same substance, four feet high, and smoothed to a nicety, stood on the left side of the main-door, on a wide sunken step of wood. It had a hard, grim look, as though the carver in his fancy had conceived, and wrought to a hair, a symbol of a world he hated. It might almost have been the actual block of Sisyphus. Over the door itself, a single welcoming hand projected

from the lintel, also carved in stone. The same artist too, or one whose manner was similar, had carved a figure on the black stone fountain that broke the main path, half-way from the street. Once a beautiful, golden thing, from which silver splashed against the mountains (for the triangular ornaments on its five octagonal pillars were yet mustard yellow), it was now darkened and waterless, and offered as an acceptable substitute the vegetable waves of periwinkle, with which it was filled, and which threatened to engulf its central figure. This little black statue, mounted on a tulip-shaped pedestal ornamented with diagonal grooves, and evincing considerable ingenuity, if ignorantly moulded, could hardly have been intended to chime with a peace of bees and jonquils, for it was only malignant and threatening. It was the figure of an epauletted soldier, prone on a rock with head thrown back, eyeing the sky, at whose lips was an iron trumpet through which the water—with a rather violent fancy—must once have risen and dropped. But when the eye sought for some fine aspiring face, fitted to the conception, it was haunted by a mouth and brow wild with a hideous surprise. It may be that such water as had splashed back upon the sandstone face had exaggerated, if it had not entirely defaced it, to this strange look. If not, the notes of that wild clarion had never brought the help so dreadfully desired, any more than had the water which had fallen upon it washed away the look of terror.

It was Charles Oughtryn's opinion, not professing it, as he mentioned, to be worth much, being that of a man who "knew next to nothing," that fountains and garden ornamentations built for frightening people "was a mistake, though noble; that gentlefolks was better provided in the garden with Italian ladies and the new-born young. However, he was not one to lower the condition of a place by misplacing a remnant of its fine days, however puzzling to the ignorant."

Had you seen Oughtryn riding to and from his farm at Bagdad—his custom every Tuesday and Friday—you might have catalogued his peculiar figure, in a sort of black livery frock over-supplied with cloth buttons, tight black breeches lost in dull oiled jack-boots, and odd, curious, little chimney-pot, as something between a lion-tamer and a funeral attendant; his thin beard and stoutish figure completing the incongruity of his arrangements with the suggestion of a wilier Falstaff. In his garden, where it seemed his desire to ruminate in a dark green slop, slippers, and a Manilla straw, but where, from a gnawing sense of the fitting—especially since his prisoner had been assigned to him—he had his rare, grim attacks of path-hoeing and reproving with a bill-hook, when the results would show traces of a mind attuned rather to an antagonism of 100 feet gums and repelling mountain-sides of wattle and dogwood than wrestling blackberry and Briar rose (when Abelia would hover on his flanks with a deprecating crying for the slain, combining the grieving of a distant relative

with the matter-of-fact encouragement of the undertaker—answered with curious, shrill, wild shouts)—in his garden, the lion-tamer dissolved into a rather troubled elder, given to lapses of cards and worldliness, with very little belief in his associates, with a dislike for reading but a respect for “works,” but at the root of his being, a determination to perceive, if he could, the best in the standard—an obstinate reverence for things that have been named first, which bade him search them towardly rather than sceptically. It was this curious quality possibly which had so early gained him his “conditional pardon.” We have all met, once or twice in a life-time, with this singular nature.

Oughtryn had, according to his own account, been card-bitten when, as a convict-shepherd, he and three fellow-solitaries had been gathered for defence into the hut of one of them during the Black revolt of 1816, and he expected to carry the sting to his grave. With him, however, it seemed less a living poison than an irritant. “Fraser’s” and *écarté* acted as his dead-nettle rather than his bane, while the occasional exceptions incidental to thin-voiced companions and whist on Saturday evenings in a corner of the great room were irregular and seemed limited to meet a flux of “blunt” rather than some gnawing need or canker. He was a careful wastrel. As he put it, *staccato voce*, to Sir William: “He played only with pudding-ends.”

It is to be remarked that from the windows the west wall was almost hidden in shrubs, as was also the front fence of bars and masonry which met the decapitated gate-posts. Some yards along the house-front to the left of the door—which was six feet across, glassless, and sunk in the wall at most an inch—there stood an old sentry-box shaded by a tobacco-tree, between two fragments of sculpture: one a biblical group with the features defaced, the other a great corbel. This was Oughtryn’s summer-house and here he stocked his cans and tools. In this also; since he had come to distrust his directness in dealing familiarly with his prisoner; since they had more than once disagreed with regard to the signing of the sunset pass; and because Sir William refused excepting on special occasions to “intrude himself” in the front garden, Oughtryn would sit, half in, half out, with the *Courier*, the *Van Diemen’s Land Almanac*, or a piece of knitting, until Heans chose, or did not choose, to open his window two yards beyond, when, after the unaltering question “Complaints, honour?” had been answered, gossip, philosophy, or print would pass between them.

Though they would meet in the cave, Oughtryn seldom entered Sir William’s portion of the house, and Sir William entered his only for an occasional game of cards in the great room with Six of the pawnshop, himself, and a floating member who was never, by the way, Mr. Carnt, who had not Oughtryn’s approval, as one who’d “let a friend down” when drinking. The blind girl, and a sad, monumental, leisurely person with heavy

hair—introduced as “the woman”—came, went, and held the ends together. Not that Oughtryn had been able to give over immediately, wholly, or unshared, his “gentleman’s apartment” to Heans, to meet whose standard it had been piled and embellished into being. For the first months of Heans’ service, he had haunted the stuffy passage between the kitchen and his creation, liable to rushes and intrusions, trappings, tiptoeings, and clarions of domestic regulation. But, in this way, no one learned more finally or more entirely than Oughtryn. Heans’ high “good graciouse!” and “good heavenses!” his negative shocked laughs as if some one should apologise; his quick departures and jolly little “good days”; his long stable-absences, presently made plain to the builder how much he might enjoy of the cake his standard sense had prepared—his beautiful, much mahoganied cake, garnished with cushions of pink horsehair; with plaster ladies, on the mantel-piece, three feet high, protecting doves; with a brafd new marble lamp standing seven feet on the beaufet and vouchsafing on favourable occasions a peculiar far-off glow; with a life-size plaster figure of a Roman soldier, quaintly fitted with a drum and a pair of whiskers, wheedled out of old Asbold, the snuff-man, for an experience; with the terrible, tomb-like, high-and-mighty wardrobe of a writing cabinet and the arm-chairs, one of beads and one of iron covered with yellow graining and full of hidden springs for pinching the unwary finger (not indeed a chair to lightly rest in); with its strange china and its choked race-horses all galloping in tune, ready rung from the prisoner-auctioneer at a ring-dollar apiece; with the fine things mentioned and the fine things unmentionable, from the numerous embroidered mahogany-footed stools which macadamised the floor to the immense, blue, mosque-and-minaret bird cage in the window, containing one very small and slightly apologetic bird—these poor Oughtryn discovered must be renounced—lavished, into the limbo of “right done”—yes, better to cut the painter entirely, so difficult is it to keep a large traitor hand from patting about you as you enter, or an ignorant brain mild-tempered before the aggressive dignity of your own arrangements.

But “lavish” as he was with his arts and possessions, Oughtryn was a miser when his fears or his fetish were in question. It was not his view, though a vulgarian given that way, that a gentleman keeping in good smellage with the police should be seen too much at “dives” such as Fraser’s; nor (as well for the first reason as another) should the notability and gentry approach the desperations in anything—such as drinking, for instance, or slopping about the blunt. In this certainty, he begged to be allowed one morning to discontinue the official wage he paid Heans, as dangerous, being an encouragement to black thinking in the police-spy, of whom he never feigned to any feeling but fear; and when that received no answer from Sir William’s window, and Oughtryn did not chance to look round from his knitting (he

was in the sentry-box) he had sworn a very ugly frightened oath: that he would be persuaded by no feeling of veneration for his betters to sign more than one fortnightly night's pass out. And though, as time went on, it was suggested by the nameless woman that Sir William's health was being jeopardised by his closer confinement, yet Oughtryn frequently returned such extra passes as were conveyed to him, unsigned, with such written comment as: "You knows the traps is watching an old convict, honour"; or "The traps is sharp after Bully Suire—your honour will be pulled up constant"; or he would draw a manacle instead of his sign-manual; or if he were easy in his mind; for "he was as much bothered with devils as a black-fellow," he would send a written message by Abelia, to the effect that he was reluctant to pass the gentleman out into danger and temptation, but offered to play him crib for it in "Captain Collins' Chamber." As for the woman—he would say that he had never known one to hit off a man's health yet: she must slop over him too kind for manhood, or present him with a sour "hiceberg" whereon to lay a swounding head.

At the sentry-box also, certain favourable occasions (the peace of a close garden after rain—the unconscious consciousness of Abelia at her piano, or blinking near among the plants) had wooed even Sir William from his grievance, and set him off, burning with recollection, on some fineness of his past, till the window rang with huddled, stilted phrases, starting Oughtryn, in return, troubled brow and beard buried in knitting, on some bad narrative of the *Black String*, and his experience therein, of that other which gave it light, so wildly connected with his life, the Black War and the Bounty Five. How it began with the hanging of "Muskitoo," the bad New Holland black, who led a hell-pack that adored him; Oughtryn had stood in the hills and seen him hung; Oughtryn heard the black women wail. "After that they'd spear the very dogs." How fifty of them caught the Richmond "traps" in a valley, and set on them with stones, but were beaten with the bayonet. How a man ran forty-three miles from Swan Port for the Pittwater garrison, his hair turning grey. How they killed the lonely women. How Dalrymple Briggs, "the beauteous half-caste," snatched in her speared baby, and beat them off with duck-shot, "near done up by their bursting through the chimney"; how the lady mother, Mrs. Jones, with her faggoted roof, won three hundred acres from Government, cowing them with a fire-arm and a cauldron—them twice in. How they'd creep up at dark, flinging lit wing-wangs on the gentry's roofs, and a palsy hung on property. How they would suddenly pounce on the unprotected and lonely, till the whites got the scares and some died of terror.

How they had a funny hate for a red-coat, and how the escorts were doubled. How Hobartón shrank when Captain Thomas and Mr. Park were found. How he shared a bunk with Don,

of Don's Battery: the hill he shot from, knocking them back with an old Bess. How he (Oughtryn) was shepherd to Captain Blythe, of Oatlands, and warning given by a burnt stick at Table Hill, when fallen asleep, he waked with his gun gone, in a ring of blacks. They were doubled up with laughter. Most they killed, but one or two they spared—him, he supposed, for the stupid sight.

Thus were a number of evenings spent, Sir William flapping a magazine, and fingering something lengthily in an old landscape which had been summoned up as a frame to a tale of stalking; Oughtryn, with beard buried in chest and bowed legs folded one inside the other, knitting and grumbling along in a high, tinny voice; sometimes, I fear, expectorating tobacco-juice; at others pausing, stroking his knitting, and staring round, pale-faced and plausible of eye, as if to fascinate his hearer—like some old garden-spider who has once pounced with rather poisonous consequences, and if somewhat stout for the kill, will spin you, from habit, a cunning, sinister, if vaporous net.

* * * * *

Sir William had just been thinking, as he watched Abelia on that eventful morning, how strange, how grim, that anything so frail, so vague of aim, trembling blindly to each flower, blown whither it would not, yet flutteringly determined, could instil into the midst of pain a flitting as of peace. There was peace indeed in that bare life—gentle and remote Abelia. She had a sort of habit of serenity.

As if to belie his thought, he saw her pause in the path that skirted the great shrubbery bed along the eastern wall. In it grew high baggy bushes, and fronting her, in particular, that leggy thing imported from the Amazon, with elephantine leaves, and sweet blue poisonous flowers. He was amazed and then startled to see the girl spring back and turn away as if to run to the house; but in her terror she went but a few steps, suddenly dropping her basket and creeping back again to the tree. He could see how distraughtly and yet how cautiously her feet took the ground. Some fancy about a reptile, thought he, some love affair—yet why does the child move back so shudderingly? There was indeed something repulsive in the great bush through whose black stems he could see the wall, with, near the ground, some half-lit crack or opening. Heans sniffed the air. He could smell the heavy perfume from his window. It was like the caress of a tiger—soothing, gentle, yet with faint reptilian hintings.

Oughtryn, he knew, had gone off early with few words, and in a black mood.

Now for fear the girl should come to harm—there was something fascinated in the way she returned upon her course—he snatched up his walking cane from behind the Roman, and climbed over the sill upon the path. That he might not interrupt Abelia

rudely in some private endeavour, he sauntered at a slow pace along the house-front. Almost immediately he stopped, however, for the girl had seen him. She was in a bowed position, as if about to thrust her way beneath the tree, and now turned with the leaves about her head beckoning him away. He had never seen her so distressingly in earnest, and at the same time her face half-kept the wall as at the hint of something ugly and unpleasant there. Heans held up, swinging his cane in some annoyance and perplexity. The garden was quiet, its bushes crinkling with an occasional gust. Sunlight just gleamed on their slope: the opposite clouded in fine greens. His attention was suddenly drawn over the wall by a soft exclamation, moaning and guttural. This was followed by a rattle of talk very short and sharp. He had been accustomed to hear a strange childish jargon from that direction, and these were two grown voices. Some seventy yards over the wall were the pediments of the next house; a small gloomy institution situated on a bare green rise, where were maintained and educated the few children of the exiled Blacks.

Heans made slowly along his path and down that beside the wall. Abelia had actually crawled in beneath her tree. Its great leaves, though heavy, were sparse, and Heans, approaching and piercing them with shaded eyes, could see distinctly a hole or waterway in the wall and the form of the girl stooping before it. Something in the picture of the girl's figure before the cement-framed hole held some curious, half-recalled interest for him. He stopped. He could no longer see Abelia's figure. He immediately decided to follow her. He had advanced but four or five paces when, as if she had seen him, she came groping out from among the dank loose leaves, and met him with a mouth contracted with fear. Her restless lids were almost closed, and she sought to get her trembling hands upon him. When he reached her, she sank against him and seemed unable to stand. Her white face clutched its shred of serenity.

She pointed to the house and Heans guided or rather pulled her across the beds to the front. Beneath his window, she beckoned towards one of the carven stones and fell upon it, letting go of him immediately.

"What is the matter?" Sir William Heans asked.

"I'll speak now," she promised, in her distracted way.

"Why, Abelia—nothing to frighten you, my dear?"

"Yes—yes," she persisted. "I was coming—past the tree—with the blue flowers—when I saw something scarlet in its centre. It was so bright—I thought it might be some strange flower. But when I peeped inside, there was a break there in the wall above the opening, and the scarlet was showing through. Just then I heard a man speak very quickly. I saw it must be a soldier, and creeping in, I caught through the wall a man's red coat and the peak of hair on his collar. Below the crack was a hole for the runaway water. I thought I would be able to see

who they were through the runaway" (she stopped, blinking before her, for an instant dumb), "and sinking down I saw them sitting before one another on the grass: a soldier, one of them, a large angry-speaking man, and the other the old nurse black-woman, Conapanny. She was holding out her hand and seemed to moan and pray for something—and he—he had his shoes and gaiters beside him, and was putting kangaroo moccasins over his stockings. But when Conapanny went on staring at him—begging and begging—he put his hand on his bayonet and said—oh, Sir William, the man said 'If she made a noise he would stick her with his gully!'"

"Gracious heavens," said Sir William, in a soothing voice, "my dear, I'm quite certain you misheard him!"

CHAPTER VII

POISON

THE world will hardly make much progress until the wicked man is segregated ; he tires out so many good men.

When Abelia, half-fainting, had been carried in to the nameless woman—and an explanation vouchsafed—Heans hurried out again, stepping his way swiftly towards the waterway. Quite clearly, as he approached, he heard the sound of suppressed weeping. Pushing aside the dank obstructing bush, he crept in beneath. The opening was some fifteen inches high by a foot broad, and ornamented by a rough frame of concrete, in which the trowel had dug like a dagger. It had been opened to drain the upper side of the wall into the house-gutter, which here hugged the lower, but the roots of the great heliotrope had cracked gutter, hole, and wall. Not content with shaking the foundations, the tree had thrust two black arms through the fissure, pushing beyond its scented flowers.

Sir William, putting his eyeglass to the crack, saw no red-coat, but made out something like a heap of old clothes spread on a bush. He lowered himself upon his side in the pallid grasses and stared through the waterway.

A few bushes were scattered about a hollow of lean grass, in which lay a couple of bundles in net bags (quaintly ornamented with soiled pink bows), some roots, and some fragments of raw flesh, which, from the gray hair attached to it, he took to be that of a native animal. How these came to be thrown broadcast was his conjecture, but among them was a small old black-woman, pinched and grim of face, and sunk as it were in the earth rather than sitting upon it. Her body was covered with a pink skirt and tasselled shawl, and in her lap, though her eyes were not upon it, was something that looked like a dead reptile, but which he presently saw was nothing more than a withered cluster from the tree above him whose plucked blue blossoms rot as quickly as the hint they give with all their sweets. Heans considered it more than likely that he had been observed by the native, whose senses would be more alert than his own ; but she had given no sign. She seemed sunk in a kind of stupor of weeping, and plucked slowly at a bit of growing grass with slim black fingers.

He was dragged out of his thought by the groaning of the

hinges of the street gate, and the noise of footsteps on the central path. He could not at first see who it was for the bushes, but once he caught a gleam of colour, and suddenly, across the fountain, where the black bugler blew his trumpet, through a clear pass of leaves, he saw a soldier pass slowly up, a bundle in his hand, and his cold, bold eyes on the house.

Sir William let the man go past and presently started towards the house along his own path—never, however, coming abreast of the other. When the soldier reached the door, he did not immediately knock, but stood swaying and looking about him, tapping his loose trousers with a gnarled stick he carried. He was smart to note Sir William as the latter turned into the transverse path, and forsaking the door, came swaying in an easy way to meet him. He was a tall, full-complexioned, dark-looking man, high of cheek-bone, thick of chin, but over his limber—almost skittish—friendliness, stared an obstinate eye, coldly and covertly angry. He saluted as he approached, yet with an open smiling countenance, as it were, just civil, if not unlikely to be caught in a rudeness. A hasty stare would have painted him that sort of ragamuffin personage who has led the village pack of toughs in his youth, and would spend his age, the revered of a certain class of toper, in its inn. No worse.

Sir William could hardly believe but he was identical with the man over the wall, yet noted if it were he, he had, for a reason somewhat troubling, discarded the moccasins again for muddy shoes. He thought to himself, perhaps there were soldiers about. He carried no musket. Still with that belittling pleasantness of his—by which Sir William supposed he was known to him—he asked, in a rich, glib, fluting rattle, “if Mr. Charley Oughtryn had the place here: as he had orders to scrub the floor, and take in furniture for the swarry? A nice thing it is, sir,” he continued, not waiting for an answer, nor giving a chance for one, “laying us battery-men on to this tack of decorating, a-running us here and a-running us there—to this ’all and that manshin, like biddies with their scrubbing brushes. Sooner go after the crows¹ again on the hills—I would, sir—like running children and rusting your regimental fire-arm—on convict rations. I would, sir—on convict rations! Spafield: that’s my name S-p-a-f-i-e-l-d: pronounce the A like a R. Now, sir, pleased to tell me, sir, if they expect a man named with a name like Spafield?”

Sir William, looking, with his fallen, aged face, rather baleful about the eyes himself, answered nothing, examining the other where he stood saluting and half-stiffing his malign pleasantries. The latter titillation no more hid, nor yet revealed, his adamant assurance, than did his rich rattle and untidy moustaches his

¹ Natives.

long ham-like cheek and thick, heavy chin. The commanding man of a low pack showed just so much under his wicked geniality as the tell-tale smear on an urchin's mouth.

"Oughtryn, as you may know, is away," said Heans upon a sudden. "You will produce your permission. I know you soldiers."

The other grinned up with a slight glint, his voice beginning to drag truculently.

"Fare and bed till the Sunday morning: Joseph Spafield. That's the gentleman's name; and that's the order."

"Where is it?" asked Heans, for the man had produced nothing.

His trousers-lappet hung undone, and, after an interval, in which he watched the other with his angry facetious eye, he thrust in his hand, pulling it forth again, however, empty.

"I'll give it into the biddie's fingers, if you'll excuse," he answered. "You've two 'andsome women in the house, I'm told. I'm not responsible to any one but the people. . . . You'll understand my lord" (dropping his voice to a whisper). "I 'appen to know your connection here to be a funny one, and I'm here on dooty. It's not for a guard to be too free. You'll comprehend my footing's delicate." The man folded his arms under that malign look.

Still staring at him, Sir William put his glass in, and after a moment's pause, said: "You may come with me"; whereon the man whipped his bundle up unpleasing sharp, and followed, almost treading on his heels. As they passed the sentry-box, he piped up a sportive sing-sing for his private ear, being a repetition of some curious Indian or Native ditty, in a rich, harsh tenor:

Morruda, yerrabà, tundy kin arrà
Morruda, yerrabà, min yin guiny wite mà là

but dropped it for a great laugh, as an article escaped his bundle, and he turned to snatch it up. Though he did so, and thrust it away, in one movement, Heans had seen on the path a sort of slip-knot of waxed string on a locket of black wood. It seemed to him a sort of tourniquet. "Them's the boys to silence the bettong,"¹ said the man, with a loud dark laugh, as he sprang upright. "Aha, my lord, for a June night in good old England! How a poaching turn do cling!"

Heans turned away from him and tapped with his cane upon the door, which lay open. The nameless woman appeared on the instant, but not before the soldier had remarked the orna-

¹ Kangaroo rat

mental hand over the door, and gabbled out, how "we was in old somebody's grip, mister, by the look of it!"

(It seems the carved fingers in their form offered rather a grip than a welcome.)

The woman heard him as she came underneath, but Sir William broke her statuesque alarm somewhat by a faint smile and the remark, "It appears differently to different people, sir. . . . This red-coat," he added, indicating the man to the woman, "has just come from the street, giving the name of Spafeld, and stating that he carries an order, quartering him here for the period of her ladyship's party. There is no question of his entering the door, of course, unless he can show you authority."

The woman gave a slow cold nod, though she was pale, and said that she took orders from no one but Oughtryn, and he would be home about three. She then stared down the man in her remote way, reaching her hand vaguely towards the door. "We must take you in," she added, as if with a sudden wavering, "if the gentleman knows what he's saying, and you're here for the chamber."

A worldly tolerance was in the man's eye, standing there with folded arms. He had put his bundle down upon the round stone. "I see," he said. "Now I tell you what, my amiable girl. Here's my Queen's uniform, and here's me presenting myself, fair and square. My noble here thinks he can put a man down. I know how much down that gentleman's got to his coat. He's got a doctor, he has." (Here he laughed.) "Well, here's my word and title as a soldier. You take me to the room, and I'll start a-work scrubbin' it. Let me have no more setting in judgment on an officer as is ordered on nonpleasant duty."

"Ah," said the woman, "well, I don't know but what you mightn't come in. I'll show you the chamber, and you can speak to the master when he comes in."

Heans, standing on one side of the door, hit the brick arch sharply with his cane.

"That satisfies you, then," he said. "The soldier is to enter."

"We understood some help would be sent this evening," the woman explained. "The officer can come in. Come in, officer."

The man was about to speak, stepping forward after the woman, when Heans tapped his shoulder-cushion with his stick. The fellow turned his face like a snake. "One moment." persisted Heans, motioning the woman back; "the presence of this man in the house may be alarming to Miss Abelia, as she is not herself. The entry of a stranger, and one likely to be noisy and inconsiderate, will hardly restore her. She has been thoroughly frightened."

The man gloomed at Sir William, then threw up his head and laughed, in a merry, gleeful way. "The 'andsome miss afraid of

a uniform, well, this is news! You're not half a Jo, my lord. I can see that by the way you talk to 'em. The amiable young charmer'll never 'ear a shoe-step from me, bar she beckons first—that I'll promise. Abeelya. Abeelya. That's poetry, that is. There I'm defenceless already! Now tell me, sir, what was them women's name's made for, opposing or seducing? The girl's sacred as a funeral, lady, from this hour. While I'm about this 'ere manshin I'm that young lady's natural protector."

Unexpectedly the woman asked the soldier to wait, while she consulted with young miss, and turning, stalked back into the side door. Sir William faced away, resting his right hand upon the arch, and looking down the garden. The soldier, after examining his companion narrowly over his folded arms, turned also, and glanced about. A clouded sun threw dapples of light upon the dark green pleasance, touching the forest of the hills with a tender gleaming. The garden, ensanguined with wild valerian, gilded with the cracked and wavering lines of its concrete borderings, lay out obscure enough, with a beam here and a beam there upon its weedy paths, and upon the small high figure with the bugle, a-blowing his silent peal from his periwinkle couch. They were thus standing, when the street gate—as who should say a far note of the very bugle itself—again groaned, and an old woman in a black beaver bonnet entered scrapingly, and came busily up the path. She held up her cashmere skirt with one hand, carrying a small bundle in the other, but at sight of the two men, seemed to waver by the fountain, as if uncertain, in a sudden shyness, whether to return or proceed.

"On my oath," said the soldier, with a deep laugh, as he directed his gaze about the garden, "old Nick's been a-chipping round this here park with his chisel, mister, by the appearance of it. And a d—d funny hand he's made of it. Ah," he cried, turning and accosting the hand above the doorway in a sharp voice, "ah, welcome me, would yer; and break my 'and too, by the look of you." And so saying he raised his arm, and struck the outstretched fingers with his stick. Much to his surprise, and apparently a little to his confusion, a portion of the carving fell "tap" upon the top of his shako, and dropped thence upon the wooden step at his feet. Stooping, he picked up a small black object, and after examining it, threw it with an oath away to the right, across beds and bushes.

Heans noted that he had broken one of the fingers, but he made no comment upon the man's actions. With the soldier he turned to meet the woman as, issuing from the side room, she came again into the hall. She was placing a handkerchief in her apron pocket, and her heavy chignon of hair seemed to have become loosened, otherwise she was her remote, tolerant, statuesque self.

"My young miss," she said, "is glad enough for you to come

in, soldier. She hopes you'll not find the chamber rough. The ladies and gentlemen said they would polish it themselves." At this she quavered up a grin and edged aside, while the soldier instantly snatched up his bundle with a rattle of broad fun, and made to go in. He seemed now in a hurry and threw a glance behind. Over his shoulder the woman saw the newcomer approaching up the path. Turning back, she called a "What is it, ma'am?" and with her the man turned half-malignly: Sir William also, with his back a little bent and polite. The old woman came on, shaking the curls from her face, and mopping it with a large chequered handkerchief. She stooped down, staring into the hall, as if to locate the feminine voice which had hailed her, and then turning, bobbed a curtsey at Heans.

It was Mrs. Quaid.

"I'm sure, sir, you'd hardly know me in my poke," she said, in a shrill, wavering voice; "I'm Mrs. Quaid, what 'ad you as a lodger."

"Why, Mrs. Quaid," he said, his face turning pale, "is this indeed you?" He put his eyeglass up and smiled and nodded. "What—you don't mean to say you have earned my gratitude by bringing me the ancients?"

"Yes, sir, very truly I've fetched you them myself—volubles as I thought I couldn't part with—which I bought seven years ago from a soldier, the very living smoke of our young guard here, though he was a holder man. Oho, young friend, are you there?" (to the woman). "He came to the door, and, says he, 'You'll take them off me, biddy; I'm in trouble, and old Asbold's got my watch and my Bible. I'll take their worth to you, no more.' So I give 'im a dollar for the appearance sake. Come now, young friend," she said, turning to the soldier, who, swinging his bundle on the threshold, eyed her cold enough, "you'll not surprise me by telling me your name's Spadefields. A bold and a long-cheeked man he was, like you, and a careless way with him. But I reckon he was a bolder and a holder man, even in those days. Ah, I see by your temper—you'd be above coming to my house with books!"

"How old do you take me for, biddy?" cried the soldier, rattling it out through a rather stupid grin; "seven years ago I was no battery-man."

"Oh well! it wasn't then, young friend."

"Devil's in it," chuckled the other, with an amused yet rueful admitting, "yes, I 'ad you over the coals about them books—old Biddy Quaid! I knew you as you came in at the old gate. Fancy now your fetching them books for the gentleman, to-day! Why, they come from this very manshin! Break your 'art, you'd 'eave them away if you knew what was on 'em! I'd burn 'em if I had 'em."

"These books are for the gentleman, soldier. So you've a something in your life, friend, you don't want reminding of!"

"There's something quare," says he, "in your bringing them up to this door before my very face—old Sall."

"To this door, young friend? Was the wrong done ye perhaps in this very manshin?" (staring at him.)

"Well, to any door."

"Look there now! and they come from here, did they? I see you staring round as I came up. A funny old place, I say" (nodding about) "for bad books to come from!"

The soldier was silent.

"Very peculiar I should have met you," she added, and pointedly turned to Sir William, leaving the man swinging a quivering bundle and staring out under his eyebrows.

Heans, who had turned his shoulders that he might better observe him, swung slowly away to her accosting. He somewhat absently, yet bowing and smiling, received the books from her hands. Indeed, he seemed preoccupied by the coincidence, or struck by the man's change of face, as also did the nameless woman; she addressing the soldier from the shadow of the portal with the remark: "Well now, they told me I'd be frightened out of here by the old Governor, but I never have been."

The man laughed. "If it aint remarkable you should mention the Captain," said he. "Why, I've seen them very books in Governor Collins' 'ands, I 'ave. But—'e's dead, I 'appen to be certain of that bit of news."

Sir William's eyes had again sharpened on the fellow even while the old woman was accosting him, and indeed, she too took no pains to conceal a sort of distaste for the man, putting out her mitted hand and drawing Heans, by the coat-sleeve, down the path in the direction of the gate.

"Is 'e after them for something?" she asked.

"No, indeed," said Sir William; "there is to be some dancing for the Governor's lady, and he is to scrub the floors."

The old woman began immediately to pour forth her news.

"The gentleman come in last night," she was saying, "by the name of Captain Shaxton. I noticed, over the chain, he was an officer, or for Mr. Boxley's troublesome ears, I wouldn't have allowed it. Oho dear! I saw at once he was not in a calm state of mind, and I was for calling down Mr. Pelican, what now 'as the loft (Ah, them was regal places for the poor baronet—I often says—now in Oughtryn's dangerous 'ands!), when he asked if I still 'ad the ancient books Sir William 'Eans had favoured, and showed me a ring, saying you was desirous of purchasing them. As he'd broached the subject, I let him in, and went to 'unt them up. It could 'ardly be a wager, I considered; yet I did not think the gentleman was drunk, though I saw his hand a-trembling-like in his sword. When I fetched the books, he took one or two from the table, and turned the pages. He agreed they was the ones, and read out about 'Fabulus Miximus,'

saying it was 'a fine sentiment.' But it licked him what you wanted with them; and he did not seem contented-like. He then offered to give me the price of them in place of the ring, and again asked me if I knew it for yours, sir—holding it up—which I said I thought very probable I did. He paid my demands out, and said you were not applicably situated. He then asked me, light-like, if I still had in my possession a perfume pad which Sir William 'Eans said had belonged to him; and he said (with a strange look, which frightened me back off him), he said, if he could see it, so that he might know there existed such a thing, it would, for some reason, help your credit and honour. Well, sir, I couldn't see how it could redound to that, and you know, sir, I'm not one who can afford to mix my reputation with sacheys which 'as leather skeletons in their cupboards! Indeed I had small-stitched it, very careful, since you was taken; but what could I say? Was he following out evidence, I asked myself, or satisfying his uneasy mind? I soon saw you must have somehow let it out. Anyhow, while I was downstairs, I deemed I'd not give it into his trembling 'and, not for the Governor's acres!"

She gave a sort of sob and wiped her eyes with her handkerchief.

"He was a clever gentleman, and when I told him so and he'd examined it by the candle, he asked if I'd mind his feeling of it. When I asserted I wouldn't have it touched, he bent down and smelt it, and then asked me—staring up at me—if I'd cut a few of the stitches, just to make certain it was lavender. Says I—drawing it away—'I'm loath to destroy it for a matter I'm not easy on; it's all I have in memorial of the poor baronet; besides being embroidered very rare by a honourable woman of the realm of England.' He was not taken in, however, but said Sir William had sworn against Captain Daunt to a leather pocket in the lavender, and if I would satisfy him it was there, a lady might be protected from insult, and Sir William 'Eans' honour backed. It was different sir, when I 'eard about the lady. His anger seemed to choke the gentleman, and it was as if he wouldn't speak no more. 'Oho dear,' says I, 'this sounds like quarrelling and black blood!' 'No,' says he, 'you're frightened of getting Heans into more trouble.' 'Well,' says I, 'I'm thinkin' of all,' I said, 'but, by your leave, it's me and my boy would be back again, if Daunt was to think I kept things from him; and you've done me a wrong repeating it.' 'Ardly 'ad I spoken, when he snatched the pad out of my 'and, and slipping out his sword, there in the 'all, forced the point into it on the floor: as swift a thing as ever I see. I couldn't 'ave been more surprised, sir, if he'd stabbed me with it! 'There,' he said, in a loud, wild voice, 'you can't be blamed now, madam! You can tell them it was Captain Shaxton discovered it, but when he thrust it back' (the old woman began sniffing in her bonnet) "torn in my chilled

"and, I declare, sir, I was thinking it was somebody's bleeding 'art!"

Means, striding beside her stiffly, with the books tucked high under his left arm, here turned aside, stopped, and put his foot upon the fountain-edge. He looked deadly chilled and fallen of face. Mrs. Quaid extinguished her outbreak, and asked his pardon "for a weak 'eadedness unnatural in a woman of 'er troubles. I couldn't be so mad with Captain Shaxton," she said, as if begging forgiveness for failure, "seeing he was so broken with it. But when, hasty-like, he would have taken the books from the table, I pulled them away from him, saying I'd bring 'em to you myself, for that I knew where you was placed. And so I'd find what was true about it—and if it was, for Sir William 'Eans he'd took the secret. And he asked me when I should go. And I said, in the morning; for if it wasn't right, I must get somehow into Mr. Daunt's good books. And the gentleman, he laughed his hoarse little laugh, and he spoke very strange. 'Daunt won't molest you,' he said, 'but if he should come, or send a constable, show him the thing by all means, and tell him'—the gentleman laughed—'by a funny accident, I cut it with my sword.'"

"Enough, Mrs. Quaid." (Sir William turned and sat down upon the fountain-edge, dropping the books to his plaid leg. Before him the comfortable house—its stones and peeling sashes staring in the midday grey—stretched soldierly under the royalling of a single gun. It was empty, the red-coat and the woman having disappeared; though a hoarse shock of laughter—a laugh like the angry roar of a beast—told they were in the chamber. A glint of annoyance leapt into Means' face, but was suppressed. He began to question her: she facing him, her withholding, tragic face ungranting among its quivering curls.)

"I wish to ask you," he said, "the old fellow seemed to speak serious?"

"Well, sir," she said, as a whim of compromise, "I'll tell you what I thought—I thought, sir, you'd really 'ave to be careful mixing yourself up between a crazy gentleman like him, and a official gentleman such as you're aware 'as your name and hage in his black-books—a man as 'as made a powerful place. Oho, dear, that's what I thought! And, now I begs to remind you, Superintendent Daunt is changed if he's let himself be maddened into a quarrel—that's without a woman's broke him down. He's a successful gentleman, and knows how much respect to show to womenkind. Sir, take an old woman's advice, and wait his reasons before you go siding with the weaker side!"

"Come now—you, as a lady of experience, consider there is bad blood between the two?"

"Well, sir, it's time I was returning home, and indeed I'm glad you're still situated safe." (A couple of tears dropped from the beaver bonnet on the gnarled fingers.) "But I'll recommend you

private, as a lady that knew you in your palmy days, and 'as 'erself 'eard the staple of 'er cell clash, unless you're siding with the cleverer, give them their 'eads and 'ands, and don't speak for neither." (She dabbed her handkerchief into her bonnet.) "Men with bleeding hearts is dangerous, but Mr. Daunt—well, an older man he may be, but if he's committed a mistake, it's from the sternness of his judgment. God bless me, never a fear-had that official! Side wise, Sir William. Where other men goes wrong Mr. Daunt don't. A man as I've 'ad a great kindness from, yet one I can't help respecting. Oho dear, I don't like to think of the old gentleman's glum white face—laughing as he did! And the lady!"

"I must indeed side wisely," Heans said, "for more than one reason. Yet—wait—I have a strange notion——" (He rose slowly from the parapet.) "Now wait where you are, Mrs. Quaid. I will return in an instant."

With the books under his arm, Heans turned down the path towards the gate, walking at a good pace. The old woman remained by the fountain. Heans was muttering as he walked. He seemed to argue with himself, and spoke with a sort of menace. At the gate, he paused for an instant, nodded, and turned back. "Daunt is cynical," he argued. "It is a far-fetched story. He may not believe me. Why should he! It is against his acumen, in which he is a firm believer. However, he may desire to know whether Shaxton called on Mrs. Quaid even if he keep away himself. His position is difficult—nay, very difficult. Hobarton will be talking of last night. The curious incident of 'the stable-baronet' will be about among the mess-rooms. He may send to Mrs. Quaid to make sure Shaxton got nothing. Would he, if he called there, and found the pad—is he the kind of man to leave it there?"

"He is in a difficulty. Mrs. Shaxton's fainting-fit will have called attention to her. Suppose it comes out who the lady is—suppose in his anger, or his cunning, Shaxton should let it out—whom the lady is, whom Daunt has so terribly condemned, it will be remembered instantly how kind she had been to him. People will wonder how it happened that he came to treat people, with whom he had been intimate, in this way; how a man could be so bound up in his profession, so stern in probity, and yet deal a blow like this at an intimate acquaintance. And let us suppose—cynical men as we are—it should get about that Heans had spoken the truth—and there did exist a pocket—before Daunt knew whether he should contradict it, or steady it out. He might want to know if Shaxton had the thing in his hands."

Sir William's air was tragically final as he reached the fountain. "Dear Mrs. Quaid," said he, "only one thing more—risk this for the 'poor baronet.' Bring the pad to me, and should a policeman wait on you, tell him that its owner has it again. Come, you will do this?"

"Lord help us, sir, what would you be doing with it!"

"Mrs. Quaid, I have reason to think Mr. Daunt will call for it—if he has not done so. That is my judgment of him. He may order you to surrender it for examination. We may lose it—sole evidence of the good fame of a lady. My Heaven, that cannot happen! Send somebody here with it to-night. Why, don't you see—he could come to me."

"You don't want the gentleman to come to you, sir," said the old woman, shrilly. "I'm speaking for you, sir, remembering your difficulty. You can't speak up against him. You've had too heavy a dose from him."

"His unappeasable hunger and his scepticism will bring him to this house," Heans said.

She faintly shook her ancient curls:

"Now he'll send somebody else!"

"Not to me. I believe he won't do that. He will fear what I might say."

"Ah, frightened of what you know, sir!" She shook a wild finger at him. "Mr. Daunt's too clever for you!"

"If you kept the pad, he might deprive you of it!"

"No, sir" (trembling.)

"I will tell you. I have a heartfelt wish to help this lady."

"He might send you a police-officer."

"Mrs. Quaid, I don't think he would risk any one else in evidence. As yet there are only that silly giddy fellow (excusing his wife) and a convict's shadowy testimony."

"Nay—nay, sir, I won't hear it from any one! I'm affrighted, sir, of the gentleman's stern way!"

"Let me request you to tell him, how, in your kindness, you brought prisoner Heans the books, and he demanded that the pad should be returned to him."

"Ah, I'll see—I'll see! You didn't mention money, did you?"

"I have my old pelisse in very good wear," Heans said. "If the pad comes to me to-day, I will send that to you. The fur is of considerable value."

She looked down nodding in not very gracious acquiescence.

"As I'm a sad woman, I never put the pad in the hands of the snatching gentleman!"

"That is true."

"If he presses me, as God's with me" (trembling violently,)

"I'll give him the gentleman's ill message."

"You, madam, know better than I how to go about it."

"Well, sir, I won't answer for the secret, but you can 'ave the pad, sir. I won't be troubled any longer with the risk of it—no, sir. Oho dear, I'm not a trusting woman! Charity begins at 'ome, and I've known days past what you're experiencing, and masters worse than this low Oughtryn. What you're up to I'm not certain. You're not a person as'll suffer a woman to advise. Because of better days, and because I had the looking-after of you

in brighter years, I adjures you, be watchful of them as overlooks you. Ah, a funny place! And funny doings, as I've 'eard, and as this very founting will tell you, with its dead man a'blowing his ghostly tunes for others' ears. Oho dear, I'm glad mine are deaf to them, and I pray yours won't be opened to 'em, sir, by violent doings, in this house. They're going to dance, are they?" She turned housewards, with a grave air, "Her ladyship and all—ah, a funny place for the music! Look," (pointing up) "there's my young friend at the window, this moment, a-peeping at his old friend in the garden. A nice old young man—not a-scrubbin' yet. So I'll go home, sir. Women 'as their work."

At her indication, Sir William saw in a window on the extreme right, the slats of whose shades were just perceptibly raised, the outline of a figure standing motionless between it and the one behind. He changed his glance to the heavy bonnet of the old woman—who, with an open unsatisfied, grey-old stare bobbed a curtsy, and turned shruggingly away. He looked after her as she hurried downward, a dark curl flapping about her bonnet.

"And troth, Mrs. Quaid," called he.

When at length he turned and moved housewards, his ear was attracted to a spot in the eastern wall, whence from beneath the heliotrope came yet a faint runnel of crying.

CHAPTER VIII

O'CRONE'S FETCH.

At four in the afternoon, Heans, in frogged pelisse and travelling cap—his horse saddled on his arm—still paced the yard, awaiting Oughtryn. He arrived at about half-past; unlatching the gate and jogging in gloomily on his horse. Heans, gathering his reins as the other's low-crowned straw appeared over the wall, got into the saddle as he came in.

"Now, where's the child, honour," asked Oughtryn, passing the gate: "making puddings, odrabit her, when she might have her pleasure-horse and elegant gallanting! I hope she's not been keeping your honour argufying again, and begging herself off. The tea-kettle for company and drudging about—that's her g'teen bay tree! A lowly spirit! Poor chit—poor 'omely one—I asks pardon for thinking better of her! If she 'ad age, she'd know how reasonable she was getting her pleasuring!"

Sir William explained immediately how that morning there had been something of an intrusion, and that Oughtryn's presence was urgently wanted. He himself, he said, had hesitated to admit a noisy character to the house, but the women had overruled him, expecting someone for the great room. Not liking, however, the man's manners, he thought it wiser to await his return, before leaving. He gave now a short account of the morning.

Oughtryn had dismounted. "So," said he, chewing at a forgotten quid and straining up his eyes at the other, "did the woman bid him in against the gentleman's remonstrance?"

"Certainly."

"Without showing his voucher?"

"Just so—feminine excitement, I daresay, in view of Friday's festivity."

"Stay—they feminines sometimes see more than us. Something strange for that here woman to go lunatic over a novelty man. Yet who'll say! They burns their boats sudden. Why," asked he, with a sudden knitting of his brows, "have they got soldiers about after somebody?"

"I cannot say," said Sir William, paling and straightening his hat. And he urged his horse slowly out of the yard.

Sir William ambled past the cliffs and up the lane to Davey

Street : a part, thronged as it was with memories of Pitt's Villa, he seldom frequented. Turning down, he stopped only at the cemetery, turning into the street above it, and galloping airily beside the graves. Past these, the road turned at right-angles to avoid the sea, and Heans pulled in before a stern Roman villa lightened a little by an encircling of ironwork, before whose woody garden were drawn up two white-bodied flies and a dusty barouche filled with baggage. The gate was open, and riding in, he dismounted and threw his bridle over a paling. He then advanced to a door in the blind centre pediment and found it open. In the amber light of the hall inside, a muscular-looking man in split sailor's trousers and pea-coat stood with his hand on the stair-rail, talking with a groom. It was a dark, friendly, masterful fellow, the lower part of whose face was set in a fine toothy geniality, tinged, however, at the moment, by some lofty cloudiness of the fine brow. He pushed in a half-meaning way to meet—or almost it seemed to bar—Sir William's entrance.

"Mr. O'Crone is engaged, sir," he said, in answer to Heans' enquiry. "Indeed, I am to say that he is no longer free to receive any but the few friends summoned this morning."

"Nonsense, man!" said Sir William, somewhat hectically. "I am certain Mr. O'Crone will see me! My name is Heans."

The man put up an implacable hand.

"You can hardly be aware, sir," he insisted, his large mouth growing less genial, "of Mr. O'Crone's sudden attack. I have orders to state plainly, to whoever may enquire, that on receipt of the news that his unfortunate friend was to be removed to Port Arthur, and all hope of a meeting taken from him, he was attacked with such deep grief as to endanger his mind, and it has been thought wise by his servants to remove him this evening to the ship, and sail from the place. I can assure you, sir, we have been much put to it to know what to do. Our master has for some time been uncertain in his behaviour."

"This is sharp news," said poor Sir William, his legs spread apart, but very still and pale. "Can I not enter and see him? He knows my name, 'Heans': an old friend." As he spoke he made grandly to push in, but the man advanced, spreading his large hands apart.

"I must add, sir—and pardon us ignorant men protecting a poor master—we are in a quandary about admitting any not known to us. My master, sir, in his wandering, has expressed a dislike, sir, of certain black-mailing people—prisoners, sir,—who have got the holt on him; and we've sworn, sir (those of us watching), that to ease him like, we'll have no soul in but those two or three special named. It's pardonable in us sir, to be jealous for him. Some of us is mere sailors, hot of head and easy angered. Understand, we'll not have the master troubled any more than can be mended."

Sir William was superb at this moment. He put up his glass,

and hiding his trembling lips with his hand, stared the man wanly in his large, bland, conciliating, brisk, yet bothered face.

"I," he said, with a short cough, "will barely be taken for the black-mailer. It is a man named Heans, Sir William Heans, and quite well known to O'Crone. It is a heavy blow that Mr. O'Crone is to be taken away, and I shall not see him."

The man yet stared with his peculiar friendly implacability.

"You look genuinely hurt, sir, and I feels it," said he. "But I assures you, no. Several gentlemen has been here—saying the like, but we gave them that answer. Let me have your message, sir, if it please you. My master is heavily reduced, sir, and quite unfit for strained talk."

Sir William asked in a low voice for a little "clemency." "Now," he said, "I had a certain arrangement with your master, which is cut off by his sailing in a very heart-breaking way. Do you think" (removing his hat, bending down, and peeping into the hall), "do you think now you could persuade him to come for a moment to the top of those stairs there. Now you go, sir, and beg that much for Sir William Heans. I promise you, as Heaven is my witness, I will go no further than the stair's-foot, and speak no more than six dozen words!"

The man looked at him for a full minute with a sort of open glaring of eye and knitted forehead. "If I were to do it, sir," he said at length, "and anything was to happen beyond what you promise, I'd not pause to think, sir, before using my arm against you. You can take that risk, sir, and the risk of my misunderstanding what you might happen to say in them six dozen words, if you please, and my master wishes."

"Ah," said Heans, chuckling and showing his white teeth, "you take me for the black-mailer. I am afraid I am dusty with my ride. I shall be sorry to hear this from his own lips, but I shall take it better, when I have seen him." (He cleared his throat, and the man slowly moved back from the door.) "Good Heavens!" he cried, as he stepped in, "I am a gentleman of my word—as men go! I will stand here in the hall!"

It was a small place, rather dirty, with a well-worn cedar-wood floor painted in white and varnished squares to imitate marble, and yellowish walls coloured to a curious imitation of stone with orange-tinted pillars. The stairway ran up the right wall, guarded by an iron balustrade in numerous round O's, and where it turned there was a tall bronze lamp on a stone pedestal. A narrow old key-patterned carpet ran up the steps, which were broad and coarsely varnished, while light crept down upon, rather than illumined, the apartment from a half-moon above the blind windows in the pediment.

The man reluctantly bowed Sir William in, with his hand on the banisters, and then went up the stairs. At the bend, he took another stare, breathing athletically through his fine teeth and eyeing, with half-decided reluctance, those yet beautiful

plaids, and the tasselled cap in the gentleman's glove : somewhat overhung and full. He then disappeared, and immediately, and quite plainly, was heard the announcing of "Sir William Heans." At once a voice answered querulous and arbitrary. Presently after the man came down, and taking up his place by the door with his face inwards, superintended a long wait of more than half an hour, through which the three men stood swaying and sighing without a word, the groom under the stairs surveying O'Crone's man, O'Crone's man surveying the groom, but vouchsafing no explanation but a troubled air of expectation. Into this, creeping down and floating about the orange pillars, a drone of persuasive speaking.

At last there was a stamping and rustling, and two rather archaic ladies in skittle-waists and heavy leghorns appeared on the stairs, and came hurriedly down, enveloping a pair of flushed faces in grey veils. Immediately after—but somewhat painfully—came a feeble old woman in a cashmere shawl and pleated bonnet, followed by two new-fangled young persons with hoops in their tight buckled dresses, and pretty shawls of the sham cashmere made at Paisley. A clergyman was with these people, and all showed fewer traces of emotion than the first pair : indeed the old woman, though she once put her handkerchief to her face, seemed peculiarly serene. The young ladies, as they kept their hoops steady with their haughty parasols, chattered audibly in a discomfited undertone. Bitter-faced Mr. Craye—for it was he who accompanied the party—found time during the descent to remark the people in the hall, and took the occasion—in a somewhat deliberate way, as one piloting newcomers about the colony—to whisper the name of the slightly *passé* figure cooling his heels there. The young women were sharply interested—even a trifle dismayed—while the old woman—who was none other than Mrs. Testwood—halted half-way down and observed the gentleman with great intently. Sir William moved and bowed a little over his glass. He looked old and flushed, and his face was somewhat deep-hewn now with lines ; he hardly seemed to observe them as they passed. The young ladies went prettily out. The old one came down leaning in a sort of serene pain on her cane. In the door she turned, and beckoning to the clergyman, had a whispered word with him. Immediately Craye turned in his bitter way and regarded Heans. Then with evident stiffness and reluctance—as it were a gentleman breaking in upon a settled theory—he at once approached him, and whispering, drew, by the purport of his words, Heans' heavy eyes from vacancy, as it were, upon those of the old woman, who took him immediately with a quiet bow, and tapped her way out. Craye added something for himself, as it were, and also departed. His words had been something as follows : "We heard tell this morning of your last night's action, Sir William Heans, and as friends of the lady, request permission to thank

you." So it was out already! As Heans did not answer, Craye seems to have added: "Indeed, sir, it has explained an impression of our last meeting."

"May I be dead, if I comprehend you!" Heans whipped out. He did not seem to wholly hear.

When the clergyman had gone, and also the groom, O'Crone's man again advanced to the banisters, holding there and looking up with an expectant, set, and anxious face. Sir William advanced round him to the bottom of the stairs, fiddling with the tassel of his cap and looking up also, his amber-headed cane under his arm. In the dead silence, suddenly was heard the rolling of the carriages in the street, and the thumping of Heans' horse. Presently there was a murmur up the stairs, and the ceiling shook. O'Crone slowly appeared at the bend, tottering forward, with his left arm round the shoulders of a dark-bearded servant. With his right hand he supported himself by the banisters. He was dressed in a black coat and trousers, but his cravat lay loose and unbuckled upon his neck. That curious angry dignity which was his, was gone very shockingly for a mien of weak and shrinking pallor. He looked half his width, yellow, and shrunken—the look of a man who has yielded. Yet his stooping Jewish figure had become, as it were, endignified with renunciation, if it shook in an enfeebled, angry way, as if it were against the making of another unselfish effort. With the two of them was an oldish man—perhaps the very last who should have companioned such a nature at such a time—a stout, pompous, aldermanic-looking personage, with a prominent stomach. (Yet how often and how curiously is it the case that the most faithful are the most incongruous. Happy is he who sees this early. Poor Lear might have never turned mad had he recognised his Jester for his Fortune-destined friend.) This gentleman, who was very thick set, and who wore his frock-coat open—curtain-wise—over his cord protuberance, took up a fine position, with hat a-cock and hand in waistcoat: his face in a state of obstinate muddled depression.

Half-weakly, half-snarlingly, O'Crone stared down at Heans. Indeed, his face looked for an instant unhealthily wicked, as of one who had found, in spite of things, a sniff of pleasure in the ill wind.

"Well, Sir William Heans," he said, "here I am. You know you would see me. I am not a pleasant object."

"Ah," said Heans, lifting one foot to the stairs, and leaning back upon a quivering stick (the man beside him darkly leaning with his fingers on the banister, watching with his cloudy smile, that foot beneath his eyes), "I am sorry, sir, you seem ill. This amazing news—is it really true? You leave us all with no warning, and with hardly a word?"

"I fear I'm weak," said Mr. O'Crone, "now I'm in it. Nay" (and a dark stare came into his eyes and he looked rather into

vacancy than at the man below), "who shall hinder me to wail and weep. . . .?"

He muttered on, restlessly smoothing the banister with his right hand, while Heans stood feeling his chin and glaring up.

"I've joined in black despair against my soul," said Mr. O'Crone, "and to myself become an enemy."

The fat gentleman behind endeavoured to pull him from his abstraction. "Nay, nay, a little crotchety," he said, in a faint fussy murmur, "a little natural contrariety. Do not distress yourself. Let us beg the visitor to shorten the interview."

"You wish me, Heans," said O'Crone, looking very white, "to carry a message to your friends in England. Now, are you asking more? You have my signature for nothing. I have nothing to fear from you. You know as well as I do I haven't given you or your friend a single moral or business claim over me."

"I came in to see if it were true," said Sir William, looking up like a pale old man.

"Come—come, I should compound with a ten-pound note," put in the old fellow, with a large peevishness. "That is what I would do, gentlemen. It would satisfy everybody and there will be no rhyme or reason for pokey speaking." ("Extremely ingenious and agreeable," he whispered, rather privately, "when he's paid for it. Know him well! Regular quiz. Daren't do it directly. Too much of a gentleman. I never understood it!")

"Ah, you mistake Sir William Heans," said O'Crone, grimly feeling the banisters. "Money! My Heaven, it is merely a matter of a little sharpness! God help you, sir," he cried out, with extreme anger and bitterness, "I reject your offer, who once, in a different situation, had my personal acquaintance. I no longer bend to your importunity, nor, in a private transaction, do I hold myself bound to men who have shown themselves cruelly void of forbearance. My honour is sadder and wiser out of the hands of such men. Nay, sir—nay, sir" (lifting his hand and crying out pettishly), "I have the excuse of illness for speaking bitter!"

"In a word," said Sir William, staring in extreme sarcasm from the bottom stair, "you have no need of such men."

"I am too shaky for recrimination. You must pardon me," said O'Crone.

"Stoopid economy, my dear sir," pattered the old personage, pitching up a shower of snuff.

"God save me," hissed Sir William Heans, "am I in a position to be quarrelled with!"

"He is asking me a question," said Mr. O'Crone.

"A costly conversation," nodded the old personage. "Come

now. Allow me to hazard——" (He somewhat privately put round a hand towards the back of his coat.)

The man in the pea-jacket stood leaning against the banisters looking up, his fist clenched over the rail. Heans, if he were in the position of some one staring, as it were, through a hopeless window—if he seemed to stoop under a weight—swung his glass, as he turned away, and jumped his cane on the pavement, even with a half-jocular appearance.

O'Crone, holding by his man, with his white sick air, cried after him rather chillily: "I'll not forget you, sir."

Hotly the other halted and looked back. "Ah, you had once a better heart, my lord," he hissed, whereon O'Crone cried out in agitation:

"Peace, Heans, oh peace . . . go!" And as he hung on his man his eyes were lowered.

"No, but let me speak your name," said Sir William, whitely staring; "a man, by G—d, of such a nice forsaking humour——"

O'Crone suddenly covered his eyes, and there was a loud burst of sobbing. At once he staggered backward, and surprising his man's grasp, fell over in a faint upon the person behind, who caught and clasped him to his front with a confused, unstately tenderness.

"Swooned away, 'pon my word!" cried the old fellow. "Tell the man to get out. I say so—tell him to go out. A nasty business. Very obstinate! Give it over to 'em. They don't come here for nothing. I say to everyone, if he's got round you, it's dangerous to bullyrag. If he hasn't, he'll pretend he 'as. A ten-pound note," he panted; "and rather polite, than otherwise——" He stopped and his mouth fell open as his eyes caught upon the action of the body-servant at the door.

This man, removing his eyes from his master, turned and ran at Sir William, when seizing him by the front of his pelisse, he dragged him from the centre of the hall into the doorway; Sir William meanwhile struggling to strike him with his cane, which, being in his left hand, he used weakly and to little purpose. The other servant, leaving O'Crone, with lifeless face, propped against the person of the old man, had come half-way down the stairs, where, seeing that Sir William was being already thrust through the door, he remained, in pale, if inscrutable inaction. Heans' antagonist (continually struck at and endeavouring to shelter his head beneath Sir William's chin) never once released his hold of the pelisse, but thrust the other backwards against the door—a panel of which was open—and thence into the garden, where he released him, and receiving as he turned a heavy cut from the staggering prisoner, ran in and bolted the door.

Sir William fell to the ground with his effort, but rising lightly, brushed himself delicately and instinctively where he stood. His glass was gone and he must search before he recovered it. There was a somewhat irreparable tear above one knee of his

plaid trousers. Presently he went over to his old beast. There, beside the animal, he rested, with his hands on the saddle and his head bowed. At length, seeming to become aware that he was being watched by the man on the box of the barouche, he moved to the fence and lifted the rein from the paling.

CHAPTER IX

CAPTAIN COLLINS' ROOM

WHEN Oughtryn had put up his horse, he did not go in to the women, but entered the house by the yard door that opened into the Chamber. He found the red-coat standing with his back to one of the windows in the same wall, his face somewhat pale and hang-dog. His coat and shako lay on a three-legged table by the chimney, and he stood in his grey shirt and dirty white breeches, to protect the knees of which he had bound together a sheaf of straw, and this with wooden bucket and brush lay in the middle of the floor. Half of the room was damp with his scrubbing, the other untouched. It was fine and long. Three small white windows broke the walls on either side, the two most eastern with their shutters closed, the further with their shades raised a few inches over the slate sills. Between the outer pairs and the middle, on each wall, shallow arches had been sunk, and in these, in lieu of papering, some elegant amateur, dreaming of a classic past, had painted archaic shrubs and ferns waist-high, with here and there a Grecian pillar to the height of a woman. The sprays and pendants peeped from the plaster with a veiled air, the leaves, a bluish-emerald, the stiff stems and branches sunken to the drab of old wounds in cupboarded masters. At the west end, in a bow of windows, was a small mantel-piece of stone, its supports grooved and voluted to represent Ionic pillars; while a stone cornice, grooved in harmony—as with a rude tool groping after the Greek—joined walls and ceiling. There were two doors into the hall; one close to the north wall, and another not far from the south. Both were open at the moment, the room indeed being lit from the hall and the span of light beneath the shades. Against the more southern door, an octagonal table and three chairs had been pushed back, the soldier's blue bundle lying there, with his cane, a besom, and an empty drinking-glass.

When Oughtryn came in, he did not at first see the man, and when he had peered round, under his hat, at glass, bundle, coat, and shako, he shrilled out, "Where have ye got, officer?" rousing the hang-dog figure to a gabbling response.

"What's this!" he said, without the least movement of body or pale bold head, "Bonnypart himself! Been a-talking it over

with your prisoner, Mr. Oughtryn. Very pleasant, you were, very pleasant and chatty. Yes, I seen you under the blind. My faith, says I, it's a herridge I see—what with swells turning prisoners, and prisoners turning swells! Not saying it mean-like, but the curiousness, Mr. Oughtryn, of the old fellow being your servant-man, and your treating him so deferential!"

"Why," said Oughtryn, advancing on the figure in his blind, wide-eyed way, yet looking rather drawn in about the mouth-corners, "I don't quite remember you. You must be a older man than you look?"

"You're speaking hoarse. You needn't be afraid with me. Weren't you shepherding for Captain Blyth when the niggers was round Swan Port? You had a burning scare and we soldiers was run across from Richmond, one of us dying from fatigue. I remember at the burnt hut, a small hulking feller very bandy in the leg. My, you was doing the deferential in them days! Helping here, Capt., and smiling there, Capt. I didn't forget you, did I?"

"No," said Oughtryn, "you didn't forget me. Nevertheless you're a puzzle to me. If you is a oldish guard, how do it come doing menial work at your time of service? It puts me to my trumps. Are you a special confidential—you don't look to me like a groom for the young ladies?"

"Ah, you want to know why they sent me? As to that matter you've fallen on your feet. Yes, I can fit you. I'm a gentleman-as has had a experience lately as has made a changed man of me. To out with it flat, my wife has left her home, and gone off in suspicious circumstances on a ship for Port Phillip. I've been a bit snappish and sour, and they've put me here for this work, thinking the sight of the pretty young women would soften my business for me. Funny cures for funny ailments. It's as much as I can do to behave unrude to females."

"What packet was that?" says Oughtryn. "We read of a prison-woman running off with the surgeon of the old *Cardebeque*. Was that your young woman?"

"Nay, I won't tell you what she went off in. She was no prisoner. Have some gumption, mate! You ask me why I'm a-scrubbin here, and I tell you I'm a man who's sick in his mind. I can't help that, can I? You'll have to put up with a bit of moonying and temper from this officer. You'd 'ardly call the old room cheerful for one of my ailment—yet I say this; these young ladies of yours is considerate of a man. They seem to scent he's off of the steady. You see 'em tip-toe in; leave a foul clout, or a sneaker of punch; and melt like a shadow."

Oughtryn—as his habit was—retired backwards to a chair near the door at which he had entered, and sinking upon it, and removing his hat, stared widely and bulkily about the room. Once or so he made use of a box of sawdust behind him under the table. He had a foolish, half-placable look upon his face; the curious

look of a man not quite comfortable in his own house, and not very pleased thereat.

"You've been here before, then?" he said, at length. "I hear you speak of it as the old room?"

"Long before youse come into dwelling here," said the other, "that I can assure you."

"Not in Collins' day, I bet! I can tell you they say his Honour, the Governor, died in this very room!"

"Well," gabbled the soldier, laughing very quiet, "I know a bit more than that about Collins. I tell you I seen Collins dead on the floor of this very room when I was a young boy. I used to go of errands for him, and running in late from Government Paddock when the famine was on, I found Muster Gargrave and Dr. Mountgarret standing over someone on the floor by that right window. They must have dragged him over to the light. I saw it was Collins, though he was changed and dark in the face. The doctor told me to run off; the Governor was dead. I heard they'd found him a-crouching in the corner of a sofa by the fire, his hat on his head."

"So you seen that?" said Oughtryn, rising and walking over to the fireplace. "Well, it wasn't usual." (He stood peering stupidly into the right pillar of the mantel, and under the jalousie.) "I suppose it was done right," he said, presently. "It was a strange time, I've heard say, when the famine was on:—kelp and kangaroo, and the prisoners freed into the bush, each man for himself. A fellow might have crept back through the lines—some one who hated bigger than he starved—and—but I heard say there was no wounds found on his Honour?"

"I seen blood on his Honour's fingers, I'll tell ye that, and some was on the books he had with him, as I know, because they come into my handling. The Governor's sister was about and the doctor. Can a man murder silent, and leave no mark?"

"Nateral 'istory narrates he was found dead in his chair. Being resident among these valuables, I get a-picturing what took place. It makes me curious to meet a man as saw him lying on this very floor. Now, Captain Daunt—you know the notable Superintendent Daunt—he says to me he didn't die in this mansion. 'Collins,' says he, 'lived in a house called Regent's Villa.'"

"Daunt couldn't 'a said that. That gentleman knows I was here. You'd believe what I say if you knew how I've been all day dreading scrubbin' up a bloody board by that window."

Oughtryn stood there bow-legged, very glum, and staring from the mantel-piece to the boards beneath the right jalousie.

"So you is to be made a useful nuisance?" said he at last, as with one rather crushed in his own house.

"A nuisance, mate! What do you mean?" The soldier turned his malign, efficient head towards him.

"Hang me, you say them as sent you knew of your knowledge of my place!" (He lifted again his hat to his head.) "You know the place better than I do. Hang me, if I'll give in to too much open house!"

"My faith, I think you'll take as you're given!" said the soldier, feeling in his lapel. "Here's my order, and pretty stiff it is." He did not move, but stood with the order in his hand.

Oughtryn, after an interval, squirted some juice into the box and came over. The order evidently displeased him, for he shifted his hat up, drawing his hand over his forehead, somewhat patient and fallen to pieces, while he brought the paper to bear against his wide eyes. "I see," he said, resignedly, "when you're done inside, you're to take over the stabling. You're to 'ave the chaff-room for your bed. Well—no—it 'ud be handsomer between you and me and my gentleman if I give you the empty room above here, where there's an old squab and sofa. My gentleman's in and out of the stable. He wouldn't get along with that sort of plan."

"Very considerate you are, mate, for me and the pass-man. What about the young ladies wanting available room? Read your paper. I've orders to occupy the stable and not to disturb the quality."

"I see—they asks free of all available rooms, specially ground floor. I suppose you want your key and your independence?"

"You're a knowing one, asking why a man of my age and reckoning should refuse to be locked up!"

"Well, you'll sleep up above till the room's wanted. My gentleman won't stand you about his work. I don't know who would think of it."

"Hang me—he'll get along safe enough for his ease and comfort—though I hears grumbling in stricter parts about you 'mancipists and your convicts would cause a man guard a good hand. I'll keep out of the old raff's way, if that's your fright, though I value a sack out there before a squab in the barrack. Believe me, it leaves a bad taste, Bonnypart, what with my disease and what I saw under the window. I can't forget the old fellow. You give me the key and I'll sleep out."

"I'll give you the key when the ladies want the room. I'm not going to have my man put upon."

"My body, I don't want to be boxed up!"

"You can go and come as you wish."

"I've told you, break your 'art, I don't want to be bothered with the women!" (There was a noise of footsteps in the yard, and the soldier drew aside the blind, looked out, and then back.) "I'm all sour like," he continued. "No more relish for merryin' with 'em. I go off slack like a Birmingham gun."

"My blind chit and the woman won't hurt you." The soldier dropped back the blind.

"Well—d—n it!—you look out, altering orders!"

"I'm here a-making a private asking for my stable till the Sunday?"

The other kimboed his arms and gave a cold, hang-dog shrug about the room.

"I tell you, mate," gabbled he, "I don't want in here."

"Why, gammon," cried Oughtryn, "you're persistin' in that false bruit about my house, are you! Ill-tempered as like as ill I take it. I can't have you pertendin' to it. We'll have the whole rout of young ladies a-fainting and calling 'ghost' if you don't stifle that bit of 'istory. We're all friends here. We're your obedient, 'umble servants as long as you don't behave malevolent, and quick to obey orders. The ladies and gentlemen is welcome to all I have. I have no say where my benefactors is concerned. The 'ouse is theirs. But you leave my gentleman his place, and me a private say, and behave yourself healthy."

"Nay, I'll not promise you, mate," said the soldier, pushing himself from the wall. "Give me the order."

Oughtryn held it near to him, congenial, dazed, and rather sunken of face. "Them orders is worded over-stern," he said, shaking his head. "An old-timer doesn't need that."

"Stern you'll discover 'em," said the other. "You get me a drink, Bonnypart. I've a throat like a padded wall." As he spoke, he thrust the thing in his pocket, and whipped up and shifted the bucket along the floor. "It's getting dark," he added, kneeling upon the straw; "to-night won't see me at the chimbley."

"You get your work done and eat a good meal," said Oughtryn, making away through the north door. "You don't look to me like a supernatious man. Hang me, you spoil my cheerfulness talking heavy! Get your scrubbing done. I want to raise a talk about old times with you, bye and bye, in the garden."

In the door he stopped and called high for "Abelia," ordering some "cognac in a glass," and after an interval, in which he stood chewing his quid and looking into the fading garden, while the soldier knelt upright in the middle of the floor, holding a brush in his hand and staring like a bald bad image of Pharaoh at the chimney—Abelia, blind and pale, came feeling over the half-lit hall, and approaching Oughtryn, thrust something white into his hand.

She would have given him the glass also, but that he beckoned her, with a neighing negative, into the Chamber, indicating, in a wide absorption in what she had brought him, the soldier kneeling upright in the centre. Holding forward the trembling, amber glass, the girl moved in, a blind—knowing not whither—smile under frightened lids. At first she seemed unable to locate a figure in the dark room, going south towards the table, but when she did so—her sight catching, perhaps, in the gleam in the bucket, or the man's white legs—then indeed she stopped, her face rigid, as if transfixed with horror, advancing only after an interval with frightened, late, placating smile. She came so

lightly beside him, and the man was so absorbed in his sly, black-pupilled reverie, that he seemed mazed by her appearance, ducking back with a violent laugh, as she stopped, with her hand out, holding the glass to him.

"Why, my charmer, I didn't know as it was you," he said, and cursed, and took the glass as she held it out half-seeing what he did. Taking a swig, he stole a hard look at her pretty, nodding head, and afterwards another swig (more slowly), and then another longer look at her serene, trembling, pallid face.

"Ah," he said, trying to soften his bold white stare, "it's you that was a-peeping round the other this morning. You're the 'ouse-pet, aren't you, my pretty? I can say that quick, can't I? You needn't be frightened of them soldiers no more, now you can start 'em like a sheep. A soldier of the Queen and your gentleman protector. Eh—now what 'ave I done? What—you won't forgive me! I'm a shiver yet. It's not the first time your pretty face trapped a great stoopid of a man or I don't know liddle shy—do I?"

Abelia drew away awkwardly, blushing a little, and trying to see him through her lids. "What's your will, soldier?" she whispered.

He gave another fluting guffaw, and threw up and lingered over his heel-tap. "That's brandy—that is," he said, handing her the glass. "I'm no man for cat-lap." Before she could free the glass he had her by the fingers. "Come, you think I jabber enough for two," he whispered; "now, you say you forgive me for being a soldier and spoiled a-standing night-guard at the watches. That's where I been when you was sleepin' sulky, and you shrinks away from us now we're serviced. Remember the poor iron-grays, Queeny. Now then. Are you docile?"

She twisted in his clutch—striving to free herself with her other hand—her blind serenity trifled with—startled, paling, and then—laughing low.

"Oh, soldier, let go," she whimpered.

"I'll let go, little shy," he whispered—"I'll let go, if you say 'poor iron gray—he's rough.'"

"Poor iron-gray, he's rough," she said, and he took his hand off hers and the glass. She went to the window for a moment, standing strange against the grey-green blind; and then fingered along the frescoed leaves towards the old man. He—Oughtryn—had not looked round. He had a paper in his hand, but was not looking at it. He was standing in his bulbous, bland, bandy way, masticating and looking out at twilit bushes. When Abelia got to the door, she examined him uncertainly. She then whimpered the question, "Will you sign the pass? It is Mr. Starkey who brought it, and he has been drinking. He says Sir William has had a fainting fit down in Asbold's shop."

"It might be a mistake," pattered Oughtryn, low but on a high key. "He has never drunk too much in daylight. Perhaps he—"

is hac'ally taken ill. Eleven-thirty. Hang me, if I'll pass him out so late!" (He slowly tore up the paper.) "Things are not a-boding good. I will go down and bring him home."

He had let the paper fall in little pieces over the floor. The next moment, reminded perhaps what was forward by the noise of the soldier's clout rinsing in the bucket, he turned, adding in a high, tinny manner: "Here, child, pick 'em up, every one of 'em. At that rate, we'll get no ball-room." In answer, Abelia knelt in the door and began to gather them painfully and with a fumbling care that her blindness doubtless made necessary. Behind, the soldier suddenly made the gloaming clamorous with a harsh scrubbing and fluting:

Morruda, yerrabà, tundy kin arrà,
Morruda, yerrabà, min yin guiny wite mà là.

* * * * *

Of this day, crowded with strange incidents, perhaps the most surprising have yet to be related. Oughtryn had not been gone a quarter of an hour, when old Conapanny, the black, came into the yard, and sat smoking, among her bundles, at the kitchen door. A neighbour of two or three years, she paid the two women occasional visits, when she would tell of her yearning for the scrub, and ask questions about God and life, rather penetrating than curious, and always in the character of one who spoke to keep another talking. The Oughtrys were rather flattered by that enduring of her visits, for she was something of a celebrity, being one of those faithful women who acted as guides and go-betweens to Mr. Robinson on his "pacifications," in particular his last journey over swamps and snow from Western Bluff: indeed, it was said that, like Truganinna, she had saved his life from drowning. "Marmanuke," she would say, speaking by title of Robinson, "he stare at blackfellow—blackfellow lay down weapon"; adding when she chose to talk obscurely—for she had good enough English—"Blackfellow know Marmanuke velly angly for blackfellow." Enough, though, of Conapanny's celebrity. She was one of perhaps seven natives left in the island for various reasons, herself at the instance of Robinson, who had appointed her native-nurse to the children of the exiles, in which capacity she served with a restless and convulsive devotion; now shrill and motherly; now taken by a fit of study and sunk in tattered copies of *Rokeby* or *Paul and Virginia*: for she had that elegant accomplishment; and now and again (after pining entreaty) dropping harness, and disappearing—humpbacked—into forests after roots and simples for childish ailment and perhaps her own.

This evening she had come a-begging a net of kidney beans from the fountain plot, and for these, since the women were bustled by the extra hand, "come scrubbing of the Chamber,"

they had bidden her round by the house to pick for herself. She seemed shy of this, doubting "big-fellow Oughtryn, him hound her off," and "Mr. Tuso-servant-man" (as she for some reason christened Heans, whom she divinely mimicked), "him holler to me from window," It seems Sir William, early in his assignment, seeing her hanging about the garden, and puzzled by her appearance there, had, with one shout, caused her to flee away like the silent shadow that she was. It is to be added in fairness when next day Heans passed her in the yard, and stopped to listen to her "ohoning" with Abelia, as is the way with women, Conapanny's amber eyes—instead of blazing with angry recollection—filled with inscrutable tears. To-night, when told that Oughtryn and 'Mr. Tuso' were not yet home, she consented with reluctant "youeys"¹ to help herself, but instead of rising, began emptying dainties, gathered elsewhere, from rush-bag to net. Abelia had seemed shy of her Conapanny to-night, and hung in the shadow of the kitchen, or behind the woman. She suddenly moved alone (serene and enigmatic) to the door-post, and stood blinking upon her. "Where you been to-day, Conapanny?" she trembled out.

"Where?" grunted the black, not looking up, but continuing her work with subtle fingers: "Mitis Langdale—Mitis Hall—Mitis Quaid—Mitis Shakerly. Mitis Hall poorly, Mitter Hall poorly——"

"Out all day?"

"Out all day."

"Conapanny, who was it you talk with on the other side of the wall in the morning? Conapanny know! Tell me, Conapanny."

"Ai—me talk with a friend," said Conapanny, and she stared up.

"He spoke bad. I hear him. Why you no tell—poor Conapanny?"

"He spoke bad? You hear him?"

She took out her pipe, and knocking it on the flags, rose, hardly putting hands to ground. Then shouldering her bags, she stepped forward, staring past Abelia into the kitchen. The woman was busy at the range, and with a glance about, Conapanny stepped out again and stood a minute under her bundles with eyes on the ground. The courtyard was yet cosily alight, and now and then the leaves whimpered in their eery at the summit of the gum. Steps came from the hollow room where the soldier was at work, and then a laugh, and then a swelling song. On a sudden, shockingly on this, there was a shout and a grim noise of struggling. Abelia turned and pushed

¹ Youey = yes.

inward to the other kitchen door, where the woman met her, and they put their arms on one another. It was pretty dark in the passage, which ran past kitchen and staircase—under which a doorway gave into the hall. Through the door the latter place gleamed faintly, showing in the opposite wall the south Chamber door standing open, and even the glass standing on the table and the bedimmed uprights of a chair. The struggle continued for the space of a half-minute, with now and then a desperate cry or exclamation; dropped; was resumed; and then dropped outright. Then followed the sound of a sort of shamed breathing. In the kitchen, the woman took courage, and called in a hard slow voice, "What is happening in the room?" There was a harsh noise as of an effort to speak, but nothing intelligible. Presently the woman called again: "What's befallen you, sir? Speak, if you please." And now there came a sullen shout:

"Bring a light here. My 'and's caught."

The woman, turning, snatched a candlestick and lit it at the fire. She ran to see if Conapanny was at the door, but she had gone. They then advanced along the passage—serene Abelia holding to the woman's waist—and turning down the warm hall, peered in at the Chamber. By the light of the candle, some one was seen lying by the right wall, near the upper end. "Is it you, soldier?" asked the woman, and the answer came in that swift unmistakable flute, "My b——y 'and's caught in the skirting, Sal; it's fair crushed, I'se warrant." With a sigh of hesitation they sidled in along the wall, and looked upon the man from a little distance. "Ah," cried the woman, starting back, "there's blood—you've wounded yourself!" Abelia did not move, however: she stood there gently blinking in the candle. He lay half on his back, his head sunk, his gaze adder-like, his long legs spread out towards them, unable to rise for his left hand, which was caught below the wrist between floor and skirting, which here gaped—as happens in sun-shrunk houses—near the distance of an inch. Supporting his body on his right hand, he gave an explanation in the jabbering jocular, though his words, his massive cheek, and his assured hard face were a trifle too remote and grey. "For a guard-officer, I've given us all a bit of sport," said he. "Why, liddle shy, you'll have to beckon me over; I've no more pluck for the stormin' of your heavenly citydel. My faith, you'll have the laugh of me yet! Mice is my game. Yes—I see something glint, and I put in me 'and after it (it was a little lady's ring and d——d if it didn't run in before my fingers), when I fancied something crossed my palm, and I fell a-struggling like a woman. Here she is—gripped," he added, and gave a pull at his wrist, which was ringed about with a scar like a bracelet. "Now you get my bagnet from the chair, my tender girl, and I'll see if I can lever 'im out."

The woman did not move, but Abelia, finding a strange courage, felt through the shadows and found and pulled the bayonet out.

of its black case, which the man, rolling over towards the skirting, took in his right hand, and thrust in beside the other. There was a crack, a struggle, and he swung over and sat up. After a space, he said: "You women scamper and get me a clout for my hand," and the two left the candle and went away together. Presently after, Abelia came feeling in with some linen; and he rose from the floor and held out his wrist—silent while she bound it about.

Indeed, how silent these old homes can be in the evening!

CHAPTER X

DISCOVERY OF A NEW AND AN OLD DOCUMENT

It was dark when Oughtryn and Sir William Heans rode into the yard, the former taking both horses and bidding Sir William in : a service which he accepted without a word, moving slowly across but not using his cane. In the kitchen candles his fine eyes looked for once sightless and vague.

The soldier was in the stable, and emerged into the door, as Oughtryn led in the beasts. Sir William did not look back, though the yard skelocked to the sudden battery of talk, the brazen confident rattle, almost done, you might have said, and yet laughed at yourself for saying so, with a purpose. The sharp fellow seemed to note Sir William's dejection, for he distinctly gabbled at his back : " A down peg, on my oath ! " At the moment Heans thought it singular the man should exercise his resentment when he saw he was discomposed.

In Sir William's dusky room, the tall lamp had been lit, but not turned up, and there was an infinitesimal noise of welcome from the bird cage, as the silent one moved one step away along his perch. A cloth had been laid on the table, which was spread with its usual groaning profusion of oversalted bacon, slices of underdone mutton, calcined eggs, ill-washed butter, and multitudinous preserves in extraordinary china, the jam itself as palatable as jam can be that is made inclusive of stones, skins, and kernels. And yet there was such steady profuseness, such decent generosity, such faithful hospitality in the old prisoner's house, that the waste, the briny meat, the bitter fruit, had come to stand with Heans—a man of fastidious taste—on a level with the quality missed in each.

An elegant decanter, shaped like a swan, and ornamented with many-coloured pimples, two of which stood for eyes, swam in its wonted place beside Heans' glasses, glowing as usual with a somewhat bilious appearance, being filled with an arrangement of Oughtryn's known as " beer " : a fantastic thing of varying and often alarming nature. The ingredients for making tea, excellent cheese, and an immense, tough, home-made loaf, were also

part of the feast, the former including a green earthenware tea-pot, remarkably shaped like an elephant, which old Six had given Miss Abelia.

Heans strolled past the groaning board, unbuttoned his pelisse, and threw that, stick, and cap in the iron chair. The fender was full of logs from the hills, but the fire had been forgotten, and was in embers. A pair of kid boots was freezing on the kangaroo-rug behind the wood. Heans knelt and put in some long boughs, waiting there until they flamed. It occurred to him to wonder if the presence of the soldier was responsible for this neglect. On the way up, Oughtryn had remarked, how "the officer there, a-scrubbing of the room—a man of small-conduct to his mind—had act'ally seen Collins' body lying there dead, and seemed troubled by, or was pertendin' to, a disrelish for sleeping above." And he himself had answered, that "he had caught him at it with Mrs. Quaid, who met him in the morning with her books, and went for him like a vixen." Well—strange fate!—pimps, blacklegs, turnkeys, spies—all may come and go, for Sir William Heans has nothing left to hide—no broken window-bar to curtain, no hole half-chiselled, to conceal, through which the prisoner fancies he can smell old summers! Poor dungeoned fool, didst dream thou hadst a cleavage in thy chains, and when thou wast roused, and knew it sound, could not but kneel and long again for the lost anguish of thy sleep! He rose and went into the bedroom, where he removed his coat and slept.

* * * * *

He was waked by voices, feeling very cold. Getting up and finding his door ajar, he stood beside it a moment collecting himself and listening to what at first he thought some human quarrel coming from the garden. This little passage ran north and south, and he could feel by the draught and the sour smell of the tobacco-tree that the window at the north end was open. Putting on his coat, he went up the passage, stopping by the window just before his own door. The blind was up, and several stars rested like beacons on the mountain-side. He moved to close the window (it was not usual to find the windows open in the house, and more certainly so early in the summer), when the voluble gabble of the soldier, breaking out just under the sill, made him withdraw his hand. "Ah," said the man, with a lazy irony, "us redcoats was soft against them, was we! Well, I think we did better alone than when the Black String was on, and you lags put in—though we 'ated the work. 'Not fittin' for the King's Regiment's,' as Cap'n Vicary used to say. Our Besses was rusted agin the bushes, and our shoes, being private found, went to pieces on the stones. When we struck, 'owever, we struck, sure enough, Bonnypart. I reclect when me and Roe was two of a military post at Crass's out-station on Cross Marsh." (Here the soldier paused to strike his flint-steel.) "The scrub

was so thick, a man with a tomahawk could barely make a quarter-of-a-mile's progress in eight hours. The postman he come running in with his mouth bruised and a spear through his jacket. Out we turns. There was snow on the ground. We come up with them a-squatting in a break around the blaze—men, biddies, and children. The corporal he shouts, 'Alt—' fire ! ' Sir William saw the ruby of a match rise in the dark, and the image of the man's *képi* and hanging hair, while slowly the window and passage filled with tobacco. "I tell you," he added, quick and glib, "I've balked at the look of a black ever since." Heans put forward his hand to close the window, but changed his mind, and turning aside into his sitting-room, shut the door. Here the fire had fallen low again and the room seemed cold. He looked about, thinking he must have caught a chill from his sleep, or from the open passage; but was surprised to find the nearer of the two windows open. This caused him a moment's surprise. He did not remember to have felt the cold when he returned. Oughtryn's high voice, muffled by the sentry-box, was neighing through the blind.

Before closing it, he lifted some wood on the fire, and squeezed a fraction more light from the illustrious lamp. A kettle of water had been placed in the fender, and this he put on the mutinous wood. Moving back to the window, he heard Oughtryn cry out: "Not he. Jones was saved by being a cockney, as I remember him a-saying. He took to the surf, the blacks running along the sand and throwing waddies at him, which, he, being street-born, dodged." Heans harkened a few moments, then softly closed the sash. Instantly it seemed as if the soldier heard it or had seen the reflection of the raised lamp, for from that moment there was an aggressive rise in his narrations penetrating the night, unrelieved by equal returns from his companion, whose voice Heans scarcely again heard.

It may be said that he gave the matter his attention because of what followed in the room. Under the window was a small mahogany table, its round top composed of seven saucers of wood, once used, it was said, by Governor Davey for his plates in rough weather. On this, beside a standish and quills, lay Sir William's new-found *Plutarchs* in a pile, minus the topmost, which was fallen to the floor. When he had picked up the latter—for he had put his foot upon it in closing the window—and returned it to the pile, he noticed that not only had the first been thrown from its place, but that the whole six volumes had been disarranged as by a blow or fall against the table, while, either by some inadvertence of Mrs. Quaid's, or the intention of an intruder—for he soon connected the open windows with an intruder—something in the nature of a green paper-packet had been shaken out of, or hastily inserted, between the second book and the third. Removing the packet, but never lifting it to the level of the sill, Heans lowered his face once to it, then carried it, with

the volume which had been under it, to the fire, when, falling upon a chair with his back to the window, he tore it open, keeping the cover of the book about it. The green enveloping paper gave place to a small feminine article, carmine coloured, somewhat too flat for a pin-cushion, somewhat too stout for a book-mark, worked very indecisively in lavender and gold, and bore his monogram and coat-of-arms in many coloured silks. Altogether a gay and brilliant thing, it would have been difficult to place colours together more likely to please or attract the eye. Yet like a beautiful and tender female, designed seemingly to grace and sweeten the earthy garden of life, it held in its tender silks—its pinks, its golds, its greens, its lavender—a stitch or two of black, as if to warn it too were woven of the elements of tragedy. It lay only for an instant in Sir William's hand, for across the upper end of its golden side, a hand had worked in yellow thread:—

“See within . . . and help you God.”

Instantly Heans, now pale as death, took a knife from the table, and severed the upper stitches against the pages of the *Plutarch*. In his effort, the green envelope escaped the book and fell upon the vermilion roses of the carpet. It was addressed:

“SIR WILLIAM HEANS
(per countenance and favour of two ladies)
Charles Oughtryn's Mansion House,
Macquarie Street.”

But Sir William, giving it no heed, found and extracted from within the pad a small folded paper, stamped with official-looking print, which, when opened, revealed, itself a cancelled ticket-of-leave to one “Patrick Clench,” but on the back (over the list of the prisoner's favours) ran a mass of tremulous writing in violet ink, even as stereotype, and close as a missal. Sir William, if he was now looking for something of the kind, would have instantly known it for the writing of Mr. Carnt.

He lay back in the chair, almost upon his left elbow, and a sort of groan escaped his lips as he puzzled out the burden of it. Slowly a tear broke from the corner of his glass, fell upon his cravat, and ran down his velvet waistcoat. Yes, indeed he seemed exalted, and twice corrected a swift, joyous ejaculation with a lift of his gaze and a harkening pause. Presently, at a noisy outburst from the hall, he sat up and rose to his feet. The kettle was bubbling and rattling on the fire. Quickly folding the ticket, he approached the mantel-piece, and raising the statue of the lady with the dove at the left end, placed the paper beneath it; then removing the pad from the book, he took this also, and after carefully extracting with a penknife the direction in yellow stitch, hid it beneath the angel at the other. He then dropped the enveloping paper in the embers.

After he had done this, he took his pelisse from the chair, and holding it up to the lamp, examined the fur lining with a gleam of interest. He then with some care folded it, and taking out an old *Gazette* from the catacomb cabinet, wrapped it up, tying it with a piece of blue tape. Afterwards, removing the tea-kettle, he was at some pains to produce, with its aid, and that of various articles about the tea-pot, a cup of tea, sinking the tea in a silver tea measure (artfully contrived to resemble a dromedary), fishing the animal out, and with difficulty extracting the leaves through the howdah, that he might afterwards eat them upon his toast. Indeed, Sir William was at some trouble to come at his meals, from the wealth of ornament that leagured them about. Part of his service was adorned with portraits of "Suffolk Worthies"; part with a many-hued acrostic; each plate demanding the same burning question, till temporarily extinguished under a piece of bread or mutton—once more to be offered inexorably when the appetite was assuaged. His sky-blue tea-cup, lost from the cupboard of some Regency blue, was shaped like a kylix, and stood unsteadily on its little pedestal—indeed, was precarious when its shallow basin held its amber quantum. The very knives with which he now cut the bread or carved the meat were precarious with rough carvings of tigers, snakes, and dying ladies. It seems to have been one of Oughtryn's opinions—aided by Abelia's straying, untutored fancy—that the nobility "was like horses; and would wither away if made to take their food in rude directness," indeed, only thrived when permitted to approach the board in a circuitous manner.

* * * * *

It must be enough to state, for the moment, that something in Carnt's communication had turned Sir William's thoughts with gratitude towards the black woman, Conapanny. Not that she wholly occupied them—the sharpened air, the energy which had gripped his frame, the swift fallings of face and sudden exaltations, had their goad and spur elsewhere; yet there was something in what had happened, something in the room or its appearance, which pulled Sir William repeatedly into the actual and stumbled him against his old landlady and that brown woman. Once he rose from the table (where, hardly seeming to do either, he was steadily eating ham and drinking tea), opened the door and peered into the passage towards the open window; and once more, when he had shut out the evil tobacco, he paused by the left window in his own room before returning to his seat. A few moments after, he went again to that window, and returned with Fate in his hands—a volume of the Ancients—which, holding up with one hand, he began to read, the while attending to his inner man, his whole air showing a pallid effort to concentrate his mind upon the fate of that most noble Newton of the Greeks:—

"But what most of all afflicted Marcellus, was the unhappy

fate of Archimedes, who was at that time in his study, engaged in mathematical researches; and his mind, as well as his eye, was so intent upon his diagram, that he neither heard the tumultuous noise of the Romans, nor perceived that the city was taken. A soldier suddenly entered his room, and ordered him to follow him to Marcellus; and Archimedes refusing to do it till he had finished his problem, and brought his demonstration to bear, the soldier, in a passion, drew his sword and killed him. Others say, the soldier came up to him at first with a drawn sword to kill him, and Archimedes, perceiving him, begged he would hold his hand a moment, that he might not leave his theorem imperfect; but the soldier, neither regarding him nor his theorem, laid him dead at his feet. A third account of the matter is, that, as Archimedes was carrying in a box some mathematical instruments to Marcellus, as sun-dials, spheres, and quadrants, by which the eye might measure the magnitude of the sun, some soldiers met him, and imagining that there was gold in the box, took away his life for it.

Whether or not it was the odour of the man's pipe, pervading the room, or his unending, fluting jabber, which forced his image on Heans' thoughts, he found himself defeated in his attempts to read; and not for the first time during his repast, reverted to the violent scene between man and black which had so affrighted Abelia that morning. Conapanny's wailing, too, rung on his mind with a strange persistency. Now came that faint familiarity in the name "Spafield," and the insistent feeling that it was connected in his memory with a black woman and a hole in masonry. . . . He made another attempt to lose himself in the fate of the ancient engineer, when he was reminded that the book in his hand was one of those recognised before the door by the soldier, who hinted at some unpleasing tragedy or superstition connected with it; and it was with this in mind that Sir William Heans began to turn it in his hand and examine the gilded back. Was the book a possession of that same Governor Collins whose body was seen by Spafield lying in the Chamber? He turned the leaves, searching for signs of former ownership—for fates other than that of the ingenious defeater of Marcellus—only to remember with a feeling of curious alarm that there had been a scrawl at the end of one of the volumes; whereon, searching the end-papers of the book, and finding nothing but an old superscription, he rose and returned to the window. Two of the volumes on the table yielded nothing more. There was nothing in the third. Only against the blistered back of the bottom one was the object of his search—the old letter—and though he could not decipher it in the faint moon, its poignancy and wild threats came back to him as he stood staring at the curious printed characters. He did not at once seek the lamplight. The appearance of it recalled enough of the burden to enchain him. He remembered the stolen meetings—the

passionate attachment amid the lack of food—the threat against the usurous boy, Joe Spars. He recalled how the book—the volume in his hand—had been given to Joe Spars to put in the waterway. If it was still here with its fellows—could Spars have put it there?

He approached close to the blind, and lifting a slat stared through it towards the heliotrope, and then the other way; but here his view was impeded by the triangular side of the sentry-box. The two men were still talking, but their voices sounded short and angry. In the instant that he harkened, Oughtryn's voice piped out: "You'll never manage it. The likes of you can't do it." To which the other gabbled softly: "What's there in it! I've known worse than me 'as rose flash—aye, played long-coat, clergy, and company manners, after shooting a crow 'en in a tree." Heans moved slowly to the other window. The blind was down and he took the cord and raised it. Just below the sill, on the mossy path, was the carved stone on which poor Abelia had fallen; a kind of corbel, of which the flat back stood towards the house, its round, grooved front in the moon. Was it a neglected example? To support what groined wonder had it been wistfully foreshadowed? Leaning on the sill, he stared down upon it, enwrapped and grave. He then lifted his glance over the garden, clear-pathed, and backed by beckoning hills . . . Of course he could not see the face, but there it was, the small stone image, with the raised, black trumpet. At that moment Heans was amazed to hear a note of muffled music. There had sounded a distinct three or four notes, rather rapid and tinny. And then, when suddenly there came a knock at his door, and the woman appeared asking if she might remove the cloth, and as he (Heans) turned nodding to the fire, he was agreeably relieved to hear Abelia playing her Spanish songs.

* * * * *

It was often his habit, rather than smoke his tobacco-pipe among finery, or for the silent company of the horses, to carry it to the stable; and now, while the monumental woman was leisurely denuding the table, he took from the door a plaid shooting-jacket, and sought cap and tobacco-box. Before he left the room, however, he carried the volume of *Plutarch* to the lamp, and examined the messages, and the resulting cry of anguish, of the malign carver. A prisoner. A stone-cutter, who bewed his creatures in a garden near which were "caves." Finally a captive in them, still attended by the usurous boy Joe Spars. Standing stiff and tense, Heans read it through: "I am to be whipped and confined for the while—perhaps forever—out of the garden. They have shut me in the caves . . ." Here he paused, shutting the cover a moment, and glaring aside. Thereafter lifting his glass—which had dropped—to his eye, he read, "Damnation seize them—if they let me have my chisel again, I shall do something awful!" (He gave a sharp exclamation.)

tion as the woman dropped an array of spoons, but bowed as of habit, as this fate-like personage begged a remote and symbolical pardon.) The soldier's malicious laugh broke again upon the window, intermingling with the tang-tinkle-tang of the buried piano. He read very slowly; "His Honour shall know of me."

Afterwards he went over to the standish, thinking deeply and twisting a pen in his fingers. Abruptly he took a dip of ink, and returned to the cabinet, where above the name "Spars" in the postscript of Surridge's letter, he made the entry "Joseph Spafield," and the date "Nov. 4th 1841." So the document remains in the old book with his addition in scarce darker ink.

He now closed the book on a piece of blotting-paper, leaving it on the catacomb cabinet. The little wizen face of the clock informed him from its weary weight of ornament that it was nine. He could not find his pipe on the stone sill where he usually laid it, nevertheless he moved on the door, where, turning, he asked the woman for the lantern, as he had mislaid one of his smoking appliances. She left the room, and he heard her slow tread stop and resume as she engaged in a whispering in the passage. A high cry of, "I was a young boy afore you in and out of these old rooms," informed him who had stopped her. While she was away, he found his pipe on the drum held by his whiskered friend, the Roman, but before she returned he had concealed it, and when she fetched the lantern ready lit, he did not extinguish it. Before he departed, however, he asked the woman if it were true, what was said about the old black, Conapanny, that she spoke like an educated woman? And they had a few words about it, the woman waiting a moment over the folded cloth, and speaking with more than usual reluctance.

"Conapanny can speak elegant enough when she likes," said she, and would have moved leisurely away.

"Miss Abelia is better?" asked Heans. "I hear her at the pianoforte."

"Yes, she is well."

"It was she who told me the black carried a book about her?"

The woman paused at the drawer of the beaufet, and seemed to consider. Finally she muttered, rather than said, "she carried in her nets a book called 'Colonel Jack,' she thought, but she did not think her reading of it was more than a penance."

"Penance! Then it is indeed she I hear crying. I cannot get it out of my mind that she has been injured."

"Nay—you don't need to have done crime to be made to weep," said the woman, in a distinct, low tone. "Maybe she weeps for her kith—like."

"That is so," answered Sir William, and for a moment he seemed about to speak further, but changed his mind, and went out into the passage. When yet in his door, he saw the white-shoulder-pads of the man in the window, and moving with relief to the entrance, stepped out into the yard. The night was

quiet and cold. The soft fingers of the moon had the foliated cliff and the doors beneath, but the hulk of the great dwelling behind him was dark, only for one candle in the kitchen. Heans stepped swiftly across, dodging the wet grass among the flags. The remnant gum wafted a forest breath in the walled yard. Where his light touched the built-in stone about the doors, he actually records noticing a yellow streak near the upper hinge of the first, which he does not remember to have before seen, but does not stop to look now. In haste, he wrenched back, rather than pulled, the bolts, making his entrance into the stable so suddenly that Oughtry's great dapple gelding strangled up upon his feet. It was at this moment he found he was clutching a cane along with the lantern, and connecting this unconscious arming of himself with to-night's news and Spafield's intention to sleep here, he lit his way hurriedly through the arch of the harness-room. The man had as yet made no preparations, excepting a few sacks taken from the chain and thrown in a corner, showing where he was making possibly a sort of trial of it. (He had not then heard of Spafield's hurt.) With Sir William, we may wonder whether Spafield, when he removed the sacks, noticed the ringing of the walled chain. In reference to this curious discovery, Sir William had become possessed of a rather terrible idea, and we now tell how he made haste to test it.

Listening for a moment towards the house, where the piano was faintly tinkling, he pushed up to the back of the cave, and here fixed the lantern about neck-high in the lower crack. He then did a very simple thing, and one we may well wonder he had not thought of before—he put up his hand and pulled steadily at one only of the two strings which ran from the sack-chain up into the wall. As he had anticipated, after a pull or two, it gave and ran steadily, the link of the sack-chain acting as a pulley, and the weight of it keeping the strings taut. The walled chain no longer rattled, as, steadily watching its place of outlet, he paid in the string through a pair of grey cotton gloves. With five or six pulls, however, the thing stuck, and after a tug or two, he relinquished the pressure upon it, loth to risk force. Now pushing back till his shoulders met the sack-chain, he pulled that upon them, thus taking the weight off the strings, while, with his hand, he swung the latter in the crack—as a fisherman might his fouled line. On this there was a 'clink,' and then a loud 'clash,' and a glittering metallic shower fell out of the crack, splashing on the floor and on the wheat-sacks below. Stooping, Heans picked a fragment from a sack and held it to the lamp. It was a piece of yellow glass, portion, he judged, of a flattish bottle or jar. Stretching up, he again tried the string, and it running steadily, from the crack appeared the neck of a small flask, such as might once have contained Tokay. It was fastened by a bit of dirty rag. Heans, however, had hardly this to hand, when the strings, again sticking above the outlet, gave sharply to an increasing

pressure, and much exalted, he hauled at something which came uneasily—indeed bunching like a garment—till a dusty object dropped out into the cave, about the size of a man's head: an old officer's hat, as he afterwards found, cocked at front and back, the front cock being torn away and bound over the head-hole, making a rough wallet. For the instant, he was prevented from handling it by the bottle-neck: that fouling the sack-chain. To get at the second arrival, Heans had to mount upon a sack, from that height being near enough to sever the attaching cord—a bit of ribbed maroon ribbon—and bring the thing down to the candle. Much litter had been knocked off in the descent, and he considered by the edgings of the flaps, and the stains upon the felt, that it had been an old hat before it was tied upon the strings. He remembered such hats worn by officers in his childhood; indeed, similar to that worn by the carven officer over the stalls in the stables. The ribbon which had attached it to the thongs, also held the cock or lid in place over the head hole; but though severed with a penknife, the mossaing of small webs about the tie-holes, and in the ribs of the tie, still held the lid. When Heans attempted to open it, he found the ribbon still further stiffened by some substance with which it was coated, and which had stained a part of it black, and it was only by exerting his strength that he forced it apart. The inside was in fair preservation, though stained with dirt and perspiration. It had once been a fine hat, and a ragged piece of pleated satin still clung to one side: white once, now stained enough. A fine circle of ribbed silk lined the crown, and on this lay a small article or tool about the size of a four-inch nail, of which the last inch had been filed and rubbed down till it was not much thicker than a sailor's needle. Its tip was still stained with some dark pigment. Besides this there was no other object in the hat but a piece of dried fern of the kind known as 'maiden-hair.' When he had lifted out the tool from the bottom, he spelled out the hatter's name, half-quagged in the discoloured silk:

STANTON & BEDYLL,
SIDE ARMS AND CHAPEAU
(PORTUGAL SNUFF, SCOTCH RAPEE),
24 SHOE LANE.

And here, his eyes grown sharp in searching after the printed letters, came suddenly upon the words, "Pull my body down," written in a darkish ink, above the advertisement; whereon, putting the hat nearer the light, he read without difficulty: "Pull my body down. The cleft's cut." Not long afterwards, his eyes discovered above, in a small blotched, straggling print (as though done by a hand practising with a new, perhaps unfinished tool), "W. Surridge," and the word "faithful." Heans made out

nothing more at the top of the circle of silk, though there were two or three unmistakable blotches of ink concealing letters if not words. Underneath the advertisement, however, but somewhat to the right, was a plain direction, though unfinished, and somehow fraught with sadness. It appeared to read: "Over on the back see what I did. I said——" and there it ended, or seemed to end. Finally, after five minutes' further examination of this surface, Sir William inserted his fingers under the bottom of the silk and began to separate it from the crown. He found it came easily away, excepting the top side, where it was still sewn to the felt. He was, however, considerably surprised to find the under surface of the material white, clean (but for a few blots) and bare of hieroglyphic. It was not till, in thoroughly searching it, he drew it out of the hat to its full stretch, that at the extreme top, under a few words in hand print, badly blotched, he found a second careful direction: 'Damp defeated me. Muslin runs. Fry on the leather.'

For a moment at sea, Sir William laid back the satin in the crown. What leather was referred to? Had it been lost or dropped above? There was a narrow kid head band, stained almost blue, and if anything had been written there in explanation it was unreadable. Not a word or letter was to be found. Pulling a corner of the leather up, he thought he could see something peculiar in the colouration of the under side, and instantly, he ran his hand round underneath it, wresting it up as he went. Inside the band was undressed, tough as parchment, and near white as the day it was sewn, while upon its even surface a mass of close minute hand-print wound its spidery way about the circlet. Hardly touched by the sea-damp, the MS. was even readable in the candle. There was one slit in the leather, where the ends of the band met at the back of the head, and in the left top corner on the right of this, a rough drawing of a head with wings, such as we see on ancient tombs, seemed to indicate the beginning of the manuscript. Heans, without difficulty, spelt out the first words in the lamp: "Here's to you, Carrow, and you, black Derrick, or Hammes, or any other desperate man. If ever you return, see what it came to after all; and if not you, for I know not what they'll do now, some poor wretch wild enough to try, and slim enough to break his luck." Before reading further, Sir William glanced down the lines for the name Spars, and found it occurring near the bottom of the leather. Before he desisted he had found also that of another. He now lit his tobacco-pipe at the lantern, and picking his way with the latter to the arch, there blew it out. He had the chapeau in his hand, and leaving that against the lantern by the arch, he went into the stable, there standing for some half-an-hour smoking beside the door.

Towards the end of that time, a second light appeared in a window above the Chamber. It was a dim light, the window,

as well as being shaded, appearing to be coated with dust. Presently after Sir William saw this window darken, but almost instantly the blind next on the right was lit from behind. This, however, only for half a minute. The next it was dark again, and suddenly he noticed that the gaps in the first jalousie were once more illuminated. A few seconds after, Heans stepped back from the door as the slats of this jalousie ran crookedly up, and the white facings of the soldier's coat appeared close against the glass. Afterwards there was a patient manœuvring with the catch, and at last the damp-swelled window was heavily raised.

It was a still, dewy night, the crescent moon running shyly among mackerel clouds, to which clung a few bright stars like diamonds among wadding. Sir William distinctly heard Spafield pull a hoarse breath, and mutter gloomily to himself. Though he could see his features but vaguely, he considered by the foreshortening of the breast of his coat, that he was bending down and looking under the window at the stable. He remained in this posture for one or two minutes, breathing at intervals in a curious, whale-like way, and then suddenly called "Mate," loud and distinct, presently repeating it lower yet sharper.

Sir William did not answer, and he could see the man, after a short silence, press into the window and throw his leg over the sill. His head was now outside and facing away from the gate, and he leant still further out, holding to the window with his left hand. From this position he began calling in an insistent, powerful flute, at first quietly, then louder and more obstinate, "Halloo, Oughtryn—halloo—halloo!" till finally, with an oath, leaning in, as no one answered, and the kitchen light remained passive, he handled and cast out along the wall, hallooing all the time, what sounded from their "hocking" fall in the yard like a pair of shoes, and after them, something that flashed in the kitchen window, and fell almost against the door with a wonderful, vicious clattering. At this there was a cry within, and something like a chair falling, and presently Oughtryn stood sleepily at the door, muttering and crying high and anxious:

"Did I 'ear any one, now? 'As you spoke, please?"

Instantly Spafield hissed from his window: "Devil take your soul, 'ave you locked me in here?" Oughtryn started and turned slowly round. For a few seconds he examined him, seeing him plainly no doubt in the light from the room. "You know I haven't," he said, somewhat between wheedling and hectoring. "I said I'd leave the door open."

"Them hall doors is locked."

"You were using the Chamber. I left that one open."

"Suspicious, mate! You locked me out of your parts after I came up?"

"I haven't locked the passage under the stair. Presently I'll be going up."

"Well, I saw someone go through there. It was locked when I tried it."

"Perhaps the women locked it—you being a stranger. They're not gone yet."

"No, it wasn't one of them I seen——"

"You seen—did you? Come now—bad agin!"

"Yes, I've had a poisonful, mate. I hoped it was you done it."

"What's this! What 'ave you been doing? Luny about the 'ouse again! Come now, 'ave you trooly seen his Honour Governor Collings' walking, living ghost!"

"Break your 'art—if I told you, you wouldn't believe it!"

"Ho well—you can tell me—if you please."

"Ha-ha—well—if I told you I seen a black on them stairs, what would you say?"

"Go it, yer cripple. Crutches is cheap," called the old convict, heavily ironic.

"Rot you—I knew you'd bilk!"

"Saw a black?"

"A black woman. I told you they was poison to me. I hear something, and I comes out of my room. I sees her standing by the wall next the stairs. Afore I could move, she steps down."

"And you goes down after that, a man of conduct?"

"Poison-quick. I went. There was a glint in the front hall. As I come down, I see, underneath, something pass through the door. But when I come, there it was locked."

"This is something pretended by your mind," said Oughtryn, after a sceptical pause. "I've known of it before. Rum and yarns on your disease 'ave done you this. Give yourself and the 'ouse justice, officer. Wait." (He spat out his quid.) "I'll go in and try the door myself."

He turned and made for the lit kitchen—pausing however to stoop and feel along the flags for a bright object which he had kicked with his foot, but which he eventually found and held to his eyes. It was a naked bayonet, and he disappeared, shaking it doubtfully in his hand.

The soldier remained in the high window, staring over towards the cliff, and now and then kicking the skirting within with a heavy thudding. The foliage in the yard made an infinitesimal rustling. In the stables, Sir William Heans moved to the small square hole on the left of the door—that he might command a view of Spafield's face. As he stooped and looked through, his lips moved. He said, "God pity you—Joseph Spafield!"

Almost instantly Oughtryn came out of the kitchen.

"You had 'er on your mind," neighed he, turning and blinking up under his hand. "It's not locked. Too much yarning about them sometimes punishes you in that way—unless you done 'er a bad turn."

"Ah," said the soldier, speaking after a long silence in which his foot could be heard banging against the wood, "black-bottle, you're thinking?"

"Well, you've had your drink to-day. You lie down. You won't see them black charmers any more . . . I've lived here four years, and never seen no ghost to stare me out."

"Devil take her soul, so long as I don't hear her! I heard her feet."

"You've been like that all evening, officer. The mind's a fickle thing. You're hanging too much on them blacks. You can spit 'em from your mind when you like—hear that. That's what I tells you."

"Friendly with me now," gabbled the man; "spit 'em from my mind, can I! Ha" (more sharp and malign), "I've been foul chid enough by an old lag! Condemn the house, will I! Faith, I've given you a queer dance, old mate, what with my ailment and my unhappy life! Come now, keep it from the girls. They'll be laffin' old Sly out. Devil take your soul, I'll spit it out, will I! Ha-ha! Where's the old beau—gone a bye-bye? 'Appy dreams! I tell ye the place is past damning!" In this half jocular strain he threw in his leg over the sill, but leant out again to ask the other, "That my gully in your 'and? Is 'e damaged?"

"Not beyond a dent," said Oughtryn. "He'll do you for the spirits yet." With that he went indoors, and Spafield, after moving a little about his room, and once returning to the window, shut it.

* * * * *

It was after the half-hour when Heans returned across the yard, and as he passed up the passage, he heard Oughtryn moving uneasily in the kitchen. It was a night's custom with Oughtryn to hail him from that obscurity with a "My duty to your honour, and a sheltered night," or "Calm repose and four walls, honour"; but now, standing in the kitchen door, he stopped him with the words: "You was in the stable, I know. I hope you don't let the man disturb you."

"He has not yet intruded upon me," said Sir William, tightening on the old chapeau under the lapel of his jacket: "a man with a very scandalous mouth. And a coward too."

"He seems frightened of the old house," repeated Oughtryn; and he related how the man had alarmed the women by his flurry in the Chamber. "Lost his bad woman, as I told you," said he, "and gone sour and angry like without her."

"Do you believe that?" called Sir William, casually.

For a moment Oughtryn said nothing—standing in his door just able to see Sir William as he stood by his.

"There's something amiss with him," he presently remarked. "He's not a nat'rally scared man. He's bore a bold life. I should

—speaking under correction—I should say fate was worriting him for something he's adone."

"We must put up with him? I believe you wish me to understand that?"

"A powerful man—I'd 'ardly dare provoke with one who's plainly got privilege."

"What makes you think that, sir?"

"Oh, I know. I know when humility is scarcely pretended."

"So we must bow to the dust. Is that the Order?"

"It's in his v'ice and manners, Sir William Heans," said Oughtryn, somewhat hoarse and shaken. "He doesn't need to care. Perhaps, if others can't, God Almighty is a-provokin' him."

"Perhaps He is," said Heans.

They parted and Sir William went into the sitting-room. Oughtryn came along to the back door and locked it with a tremendous clap. It was his notion of the fitting to remain in hiding till Sir William had gone. He had slithered back into the kitchen passage, and extinguished a dim light there, when Sir William re-opened his door. "What do the women think of it, Oughtryn?" he called.

"Oh," said Oughtryn, in a small, haggish voice and coming to the corner of his passage as fearing an eavesdropper, "the woman—she slides away from the subject, calling him 'a well set-up army officer,' but the two are resting down to-night."

"And Miss Abelia—how does she take it?"

"Well, women seldom spurns the sick man, even if he's a ill one," he said; "and since she's been a-tendin' of his wrist, Abelia, she says he's 'a brave bold man,' she thinks . . . But I'll ask you, sir, to read the back-hand for yourself." So the cautious fellow said "Good-night," and Heans heard his steps dwindle along the flagged passage and the stair door slam.

When he turned into his room, he felt a half-chill which told him at once one of the windows was again open. He was of course much surprised. The green blinds were now down, and the room lay serenely in its illustrious half-light, the fire burning quiet. The chill from the window was unpleasantly sharp. He put the old chapeau on the table and turned to shut it. He was not, however, done with the horse happenings of that day.

Thinking he heard the left jalousie flapping, he went first to that, but stooped first to raise the books, two of which had again fallen from the table. This startling him, he turned to the cabinet, on which he had left Surridge's volume of the *Plutarch*. It was gone. At the same moment he noticed that a thin-necked vase, top-heavily stuck with rose-apples, had been overturned upon the table. He picked up the vase, searched the room for the missing volume, and then returned to the window. He now noted that the little table had been pushed to the left of the sill, occasioning perhaps the fall of the books. He put his hand on the cord and pulled the blind. The window had been thrown

up to the limit of the lintel. Of the cedar shutters (nightly fastened by Oughtryn from outside), the right was 'still open, and leaning forward, he saw, in the soft moon against the wall, the cloth-enwrapped face and shawled shoulders of a black-woman. She seemed like a small beast that crouches in, half fascinated, half terrified into courage. Her large eyes, at first unseeingly upon the garden, when she turned them upon himself, she either could not or would not move as the fear in them prompted—nay, importuned. As, in the surprise of the instant, he drew back into the room, and again looked through the shutter, a faint sound, something between threat and bleat, escaped her frozen figure. Sir William saw with a sudden and dreadful sense of shock that beside her bundles, by the corbel, the *Plutarch* lay upon the path.

"Why," said he (as he relates), speaking as carelessly as he could, "so it is you, Conapanny! What can I give you for bringing me my precious package to-day?"

She said nothing, though once more that curious sound escaped her; and she moved, as with a vast effort, perhaps a foot nearer to him. The moon fell from a mackerel cloud, and she put up her hand to shield her face. In a moment it was gone, yet as if her movement had freed her from the spell of a stricken hour, and still shielding her face though the terrace was beshadowed, she bent down, and raising the book from the path, stretched forward and held it to the sill by Heans' hand. He gently put out his hand and pushed it back.

She slowly drew back her hand with the book in it. Her eyes were on him. At last her voice issued from her lips—panting, low, entreating: "Conapanny know old house—old book. In old time Conapanny Moicrime. Moicrime go away——" Her voice broke, and she fumbled open the cover of the book, holding Surridge's letter up to him on a level with the sill. "You take Mitta Tusó," she entreated. "Conapanny see book in window—afternoon. Me come see you to-night. Me read what poor Walter wrote."

"How many years ago was this written?" asked Heans, taking the book from her, and pretending to peruse the letter, yet at a loss what to say, seeing what he knew.

"O—oh, thirty-three — thirty four — thirty-five year," said Conapanny, dropping to the native's droning way. "Gubner Collins—Gubner Davey—Gubner Arthur, all gone. Gubner Franklin now. Collins—him die.——" And she stopped short, rose without a sound, and looked along the front of the sleeping house.

"You call him 'poor Walter?'" asked Sir William Heans, sharply. "Why do you think him lost to you?"

"He no alive," said she. "Years ago—gone. Moicrime look long time. She not know yet."

"What doesn't she know yet?"

"She not know yet—how!"

"Does Moicrime think any one—knows?"

"Some one know."

"Why should she think he died so long ago as that?"

"Not forget," she said, in a faint, harsh whisper at the bottom of her throat, and she shrank back once more into the wall.

Sir William—waiting there with his unhallowed knowledge—was too moved for a while to continue. "Do you mean," he said unsteadily, "that—after so many years—you are still looking for someone to tell you what happened to Walter Surridge?"

"Yes, Mitta Tusso," she said, staring at him. Before he could continue, she suddenly rose by the window, and snatching the book which Heans had replaced, opened and examined it in the faint moon. Turning then with her finger on a word in the postscript of the letter, she elevated the book towards Heans' face.

"That bad wite," she said, "him know how Walter go from Moicrime."

Sir William bent his eyes to the name by which her finger rested, but whether by accident or design, she was pointing not to the name in the old document, but the one beneath it, the ink of which was hardly dry.

"Years ago, Moicrime try make him speak. No. Old Conapanny—she ask him about Moicrime—Walter—other day—to-day—no. She ask old Gubner Collins' house—old house dumb. She ask book, book speak——"

Sir William could barely brook her figure hanging by the window, and turned back into the room, folding his arms. When angry at his ineptitude, his powerlessness to speak of Surridge's brave end because of the deed he believed had led to it (not knowing whether this silent spirit of the past had had time, or yet allowed herself, to connect threats with death), when rendered bitter with his locked mouth, he turned to the window, his heart heavy with its burden, yet half inclined to speak something of the entombment of lost Walter—there was the corbel lying by the wall, but no sign of Conapanny or her beribboned bags. She was gone. In the soft moon, the gilt-framed book lay foreignly on the edge of the stone sill.

Then, across the garden, he caught the shadow of her, striding under her bundles by the Orphanage wall. Near the heliotrope she disappeared. Nay, she has turned west. There she goes (he pulls the shutter closer) between bush and tree, her head in its white kerchief on a level with her burden. Her hate or agony have brought the sweat upon her face and its dark skin glitters. Now, past the medlar-tree, she turns down beside the fountain, her eyes bent upon the periwinkle in its broken basin, where once the water had reflected her young face.

How still are these old gardens in the night! How indurate, scarred, and meaning are their once graceful ornament! For how long can they nurse a wrong in their old bosoms! Queen

Elizabeth (we read in history) expressed a doubt to her General in France of the wisdom of turning persons out of their houses that Havre might be safer held; she 'doubted,' if they were driven from their homes, 'whether God would be contented with the rest that would follow.' History tells us what happened to the garrison in Havre, and by what they were defeated.

Perhaps Sir William Heans, as he glared about the garden upon this and that, upon its heroic arrangement, its wrestling roses, its finger-marked rocks half swallowed in weeds, its blackened, corroded, presiding figurette, realised a little plainer than "brother Warwick" of the old day with what strange line and rule the Almighty works. Heans relates how later he had a vision of Moicrime, slim and straight, in a blue, high-waisted dress. (Poor, pretty, vivacious Moicrime!) But this, we think, was only his poetic way of putting it, unless, indeed, his tired fancy had gotten the better of him after he had read the writing in the chapeau.

CHAPTER XI

NOT A VULGAR QUARREL—AN ALBUM—MISCHIEF IN THE WIND

It seems that daft devotee, Homely O'Crone, had, before his departure, received and lent to Mrs. Scudamore a copy of Serjeant Talfourd's latest tragedy: *Glencoe*; or, *The Fate of the Macdonalds*, just produced by Mr. Macready at the Haymarket. All young Hobartia had been spouting the sonorous lines, and it had not been long before a clique had been meeting at Isnaleara, the mansion of the Hon. Mrs. McKevin, with the intention of producing it on its own account. Let it be said that the occasion of its playing—though semi-private—was such a success, the audience were so pleasantly elevated by the nobility of the tragedy (Ensign Tipton, as Henry, the traitor brother, being especially stormy and successful in a uniform of the Argyll Regiment designed by old Duterreau), that, at her Ladyship's request, and out of compliment to the intrepid lady, it was agreed to reproduce the first scene of Act 2, and the last, in "Mr. Daunt's room" at the fascinating old ruin in Macquarie Street.

It was so kind of Mr. Daunt to bend to triviality—a man so preoccupied with real things. The young ladies were full of admiring gratitude. Miss Gargrave, who though she was eighteen, still wore an iron collar covered with velvet to make her hold up her beautiful neck, said of him: "He is such a nice man—I think." On the other hand old Miss Bullinger Lecale, who had watched him from the past with 'an ill-boding eye,' and for years had pounced with unerring instinct on any sign of horsiness in him, "could not think what Satan would be up to, leading the gells into those old damp places." But then Miss Lecale, if once a war-heroine, had troubled her vogue somewhat. She was inclined to the outrageous after enforced silence. Was it not she who had remarked before a gentleman, "she would like to see the women with their tobacco-pipes"; and was it not Mr. Daunt who asked: "But would the ladies keep it up?" She was angelical, but she had no repose! It is a pity—perhaps an insuperable tragedy—that so many of the things which make for our peace depend upon the petty observances of life. Ah, we can all bear the smarts; the difficulty becomes dangerous when they are inflamed by the flunkey and

the cad! "Even the gentlemen do not approve of her *prononcé* style," said young Miss Gargrave, as she brushed her hair before a friend's toilette. "Men are such fools," answered her insouciant companion, and straightway descended to the withdrawing-room, where she presented the young gentlemen with their image of a good woman.

When on Monday night the rumour got about that the Commandant of the foot police had said something derogatory to the reputation of a certain lady, and, at a luncheon on Tuesday, that comical Captain Shaxton had daringly confirmed it, and laughingly (and actually with his wife on his arm) said that he was going to make a serious thing of it and bring Mr. Impudence out in a new line—that of Mr. Pickwick in the challenge scene, "brandy and water—jolly old gentleman—lots of pluck," though there was swiftly and magically a slump in Mr. Daunt, and his thoughtfulness for the young people, there were those who remembered meeting the man Heans both at Pitt's Villa and Flat Top Tier, and feeling for Mrs. Shaxton in being forced by their relationship, and common kindness, into intimacy with a person of such a notoriety. It was really very interesting to hear how the better nature of the man had prevailed and he had come forward in his humiliation to speak for one who had shown him so much kindness. "Common kindness! well, it had been more—it was exceedingly romantic; brave; indiscreet; and unpleasant; and all were glad—glad and happy—to feel the man's testimony was unnecessary. Captain Shaxton was right in showing it all up and forcing Mr.-Daunt forward."

She had fainted, it seems, when she heard her cousin was actually assigned in the house.

The reader will remember how, on the occasion of a certain dinner to the explorers at Hodgson's Hotel, Captain Shaxton took occasion to nudge Mr. Daunt. A nod is as good as a wink to some. After Sir William Heans' arrest at Spring Bay, concerning which there was so much sympathy for the Shaxtons, the prisoner having cleverly made use of their réunion at the Tier as a blind to his absconding (for that was how the story began), there could not help but be a little tension in the relations between the Shaxtons and Mr. Daunt: mere good taste—it was noticed—rendering their relations less intimate for a while, and indeed, bruising the pleasant ties of acquaintance, so that, though all parties met and conversed, it was evident the same degree of familiar intercourse, which had been known to exist, was never quite resumed. Not that any vulgar cold-shouldering or boding looks had been observed; nothing more than your good woman's inability to forgive a too open clamouring of Duty in the gentle house of Friendship. Nor had it ever been held against Mr. Daunt in society that he had given permission to a prisoner acquaintance to attend a friend's soirée, knowing him to be in leaguer for his escape. It was even whispered that Heans'

conspiracy, which had been for some time preceding his escape under the eyes of the authorities, had been known in much higher quarters, and that this was but one more chance to persuade him to acquiesce in his position. No, it was a high feather in Mr. Daunt's cap, about which, be it said to his credit, he had never "spoken a word." Let us say here, concerning this matter, not a breath of suspicion had been breathed against him—even of "a little natural jealousy": a phrase not unfamiliar upon his lips. Among his faults he had the rather forgivable one in a police officer of being a little too easy with the small sins of character. "It always came as a relief to him," he once said, in his brisk way, "and somewhat of a surprise, to see people content with the smaller crimes"; or, as poor Shaxton had added with a chuckle: "content with their pocket knives."

In point of fact, would the thing have got out, but for Captain Shaxton himself? It seems Mr. Daunt had spoken under the rose; hadn't mentioned a single name. Was he really to blame? The subject had cropped up and the other gentlemen had given this and that tale. Mr. Daunt had kept his secret, merely relating what seemed to him a certain probability. Of course it was a scandalous thing to say, even of an unknown person, if you had not had the direct evidence. But then the Superintendent had given no date, and he had been in Hobart Town many years. (Fought his way up, it was said, in Davey's time, and had a scar or two.) It might have been any officer's wife from Governor Davey to Governor Franklin, and any escaping convict. Really nobody would have connected such a thing with the Mrs. Shaxton, who had the cousin, the prisoner. Yet—there had, after all, been a low 'Captain' in Sir William Heans' case; every one had laughed over the old Government schooner, the farce of her dilatory arrival at Spring Bay,¹ and bare escape out of the police boats. Everybody remembered the case in the *Courier*. Would you then have credited Mr. Daunt with recklessness? Had the guilty secret, which he had kept so strictly, and which he fancied true, made him cynical about women? He often said those bitter little things. But he must have known dear Mrs. Shaxton—

Here we must pause to confess that what happened to Heans at his capture at Spring Bay is unknown to us. He is reticent of his experience at that moment. Neither can we furnish a more definite reason for the ensuing coolness between Daunt and Matilda Shaxton than her account to a friend of an interview in which the Superintendent made some "grave mistake." We give here, however, a "reflection" written by Sir William Heans, at the moment of his assignment to Charles Oughtryn, in the pages of his private album (September 6th, 1840): the latter a species

¹ There was a probation-station at Spring Bay.

of memorandum, begun but rudely broken into, from which we get some drops of confirmation of a narrative based too much on letters written with reserve. Is it a sober thought that this has an echo in it of the indignities of capture—and even throws a light on Mrs. Shaxton's words of reprobation? Perhaps a troublesome inference, yet, as will be seen, confirmed much in Sir William's portfolio of French despatches to his friend Charles Scarning:—

"Say, when the protagonist of gross ambition has you in his hold, when will he strike you, when will he use that power? When will come the irresistible moment? It will be in a moment of *ennui*—in an instant of impatience. Ah, how pitiless can be this being—with no uplifting ardour save ambition—and a heart resilient with released enmity, is known only to those who have survived revolution, mean stagnation, or any of those abnormal moments in which he finds his power! Of what use the chivalric sentiment that in the last extremity of human wrong a tyranny may be met by force! How bravely, for a while, shall the lonely penitent face the inquisitors! Such sad survivors know how strange the earth looks close against the eyes."

Between the caligraphy of wounded pride, the flourish of ill-borne humiliation, can we detect a something pricking through law's spirit—a half-vindictive weapon come of self-guidance by the sound of right which can so easily become its echo?

In any case, Captain Shaxton was afraid it would be traced to his wife, as the stableman's name was known, and he (himself) had shown interest in the slandered woman. Captain Kent, who was in the stable, said it was wonderful how he took everybody in, only showing decent feeling for 'the poor woman,' and how all along it had the making—what with Daunt's sternness and conviction—of an ugly affair. Of course Daunt had backed him up and behaved decently. What might not a man of less refinement have said of a lady in a stable! As for Heans, he was sharp as a needle, speaking of Mrs. Shaxton as "the fair incognita." How impossible it was to imagine Mrs. Shaxton in an *affaire du cœur*, even with a man of so handsome a person as some remembered that of Sir William Heans when first transported! Nowadays, with that *passee* figure, with the port-wine face, and shred of pathetic ceremony, it was very unpleasing. True, the lady's very indiscretion proved her probity. Captain Kent said he protested he did not think anything would have come of it if Captain Shaxton had but held his tongue. But, indeed, how could he let it rest on the silence of a gentleman, who, if he had mistakenly spread a falsehood, had once been an intimate of his house—and the other man's generosity. As a man of honour—how could he bear it! Captain Shaxton was so important now that he was to be architect of the Port Arthur prison,

and so, of course, was Commandant Daunt. All the world wondered why, having kept the secret so long, he made so strange a mistake.

There must have been some reason. Mrs. McKevin (who was quite one of his admirers) thought it was all Mrs. Shaxton's fault for never quite forgiving the Commandant for catching Heans. It was very unwise of her not to forgive a man so clever—but our Miss Lecale who, as we said, had pursued him with dislike from days out of mind, and watched for his real or fancied weaknesses with the unaltering perseverance of a cat upon a field-mouse, or as Shaxton said, "with a highly sisterly affection," and in justice to Daunt, with very few wounds in return—Miss B. said: "Captain Shaxton will never get the man to fight, and if he doesn't look out, for all his chuckles, his pistols, and his perfume-pad, he will never quite clear his stainless wife of her silly play with the old *beau garçon*."

While Hobarton was hesitating whether to laugh with Captain Shaxton, or fear with some indefinable prompting that the moves of two such quiet players held some indeterminate danger, Mr. Daunt actually appeared the following morning at Pitt's Villa, rang, and was admitted to the presence of Mrs. Shaxton, who was lying on a sofa in her drawing-room; with her being Mrs. Meurice, her old neighbour, a Miss Towerson, and Ensign Tipton. The last named were in riding attire, and had, it seems, galloped up to rehearse with Mrs. Shaxton their respective parts in *Glencoe* in which tragedy Matilda still bravely held to her promise of prompting. The audacity of this interview caused unfavourable comment throughout the two cliques of Hobart Town, coming even to the ears of the Governor, who touched on his attempts to divert Heans from his downward course, and expressed a doubt "If Mr. Daunt (with whom he could not always agree) were wise in waiting on Mrs. Shaxton in view of the freshness of the wound."

Tipton, when he caught the name and who it was, was inclined to resent the visit, and rose with a dark air, but Mrs. Shaxton, with a softened look, got up and received him; and in a sort of grey flurry pointed him to a chair. Mrs. Meurice herself sprang up, and made him a little *congé*, with tears in her very red face. The beautiful Miss Towerson, who was taking the part of 'Helen,' nodded forward from her chair, but did not take her chin from her hand. She held herself rather annoyed and aloof. A quite accomplished actress of tragedy, she was only barely acquainted with Mrs. Shaxton and not much more with Mr. Daunt. For her it was a vexatious moment. Who would wonder if she were a little frightened!

Daunt, who was attired in a tight black frock and cords, looked somewhat too saddled with grave issues for his company. For a time he said very little, leaning forward upon his hat and gloves, his grizzled face sunk in his collars, listening with intent-

ness to all that was said, only now and then giving, by witticism or steely word, a hint of his alertness.

It was a doubtful situation, and though it was late in the morning, none of the three other visitors would leave Mrs. Shaxton—a club antagonism to Daunt alone rendering Tipton blind to the signals of Miss Towerson. All three sat on in their chairs, keeping up a flagging talk, which Mr. Daunt aided with terse anecdote or a bit of news. Even with such a deadly business under the surface, none could help but be interested in the surface reason for his visit. He wished to ask Mrs. Shaxton whether she were interested enough in human sadness to undertake a call upon the woman in the Cascades in whom poor O'Crone had been interested. She was as suddenly stricken as had been that person at the news that she was to go away. It was thought of asking Lady Franklin to visit her. It was believed that a visit from any one of her own status of refinement would revive her. "If he could prevail on Mrs. Shaxton," he said, "and perhaps Mrs. Meurice, if that lady had pity to spare, he believed the woman would make an effort and they would get her away."

"Was not her crime something very displeasing?" Mrs. Meurice had asked.

"Very," said Daunt, and then seemed to demur, dropping his chin in his hand. "Forgive me for putting it, frankly. But there is no getting round the fact that, however merited it may have been, she pistolled her husband."

The visitors found it difficult to hide their interest in the history of "O'Crone's convict," though sharp old Mrs. Meurice, who had regained a scarlet composure, warned Matilda: "I am sure, with your *bâl paré*, you could never go through with it!"

"Believe me," said Daunt, "you are wrong. She is a proud, gentle-natured woman, given to reading and hand-painting. Her influence in the prison has been widely felt. She has made quite a name for herself—playing the lady bountiful: even refusing an assignment, preferring apparently her work among the sick and private studies. Her sickening has given the notion she has been informed of the departure of her impetuous admirer, though according to Leete she has never acted up to his caprice. Yet with the women coming in to the factory and going out, it might have got about. She weeps. She will not eat. Tears—tears! She will unbend to no one. It is—*we* think—a pity. She has set her will against Port Arthur. If she could but be got to the Commandant's house there—a breezy place in its own grounds—she will be out of danger."

"Is it so dreadful as that?" asked Matilda, unfurling her pale flag of help: "a matter of returned devotion?" (Of course, none present knew so early poor O'Crone had been the Earl of Daisley.)

"Call it a recluse's whim to remain in her den, madam,"

said Daunt, "and you will be near the opinion of your obedient humble servant."

"I protest—the poor soul expiring of a—a whim, sir!" objected Mrs. Meurice, who would have said anything in antagonism to Daunt; "people do not expire of such thing!"

"We are all dying of whims, madam," said Mr. Daunt; "a few preferring that the whim should be a fine whim: the rest of us for a whim. Ah, Mrs. Shaxton, you who are expiring of a fine one, at least you will accompany me to the prison. You will come with me in a fly to-morrow—out of pure kindness. Between us can we not rescue the woman?"

"I don't think I can go with you," said Matilda, very quiet.

"You don't do yourself justice, then," said Daunt, leaning forward with a strange pallor. "There is something about this woman that will appeal to you. I beg of you to come with me on this peculiar occasion. You, with your cleverness and sensibility, will manage it. Won't you come to the rescue? Our man's wit is at a dead wall."

Matilda raised her sick eye a little from her work. She seemed almost grave: "I could not stand grossness or harshness," she said: "I can't think you would put me against grossness or harshness."

Tipton was glowering. "Mrs. Shaxton," he laughed, "'pon my soul you're too serious!"

"Indeed, madam," said Daunt, grizzled, stern, and pleading, "the poor lady is neither gross nor hard. I would not dream of putting you in such a position. You may trust in me. I came up this morning relying on your pity. Your kindness—who should know it better than I, who have been a guest here for four years now? Have I been mistaken in again trading on it? We come again and again, madam, to the rare places where it refuses to die—steer our dark ships, madam, impudently into the haven. Weary men, dear lady, fighting our erring war—will you tell them it is not here?"

"I do not know," said Matilda, sewing in a quiet flurry. "You are very complimentary—you are very complimentary to me. I don't think it can be fair to be stern—to be so full of duty—and come claiming your gentleness from the women. Why—why do you ask me? Are you sure I shall answer you gently?"

She looked up at him strainedly where he sat leaning forward on his cane. "Are your sails dark with storm, Mr. Daunt? are you come in your strength?" said she.

"You are jesting with us poor men, Mrs. Shaxton," he said.

"No—no," she corrected him. "Is the woman dying from the handling of that place? She must not die of that. Do you remember how a year ago you spoke to me standing at that mantel-piece—you spoke against somebody to me, and I told you

I thought it was so dangerous to be stern, especially with people whom one does not like or approve of?"

"I protest," said Daunt, a little yellow, and nodding very vigorously, "it is often heart-breakingly difficult to disapprove."

"What—of those you dislike, sir! Ah, how near is your 'justice' to persecution; even if you are a Crichton yourself—and who has always been that!" (Her face grew very pinched and strange.)

"You mean," said Daunt, "a step too much—a frankly mistaken step—a misreading of character, and one is himself the wronger. How true—how very true! But is—was discretion mistaken in that case? No, we are so used to being in the right! Dear madam, we are weary of it, sure of it, laying our nets by our conviction—by our dislike, if you please, and only waiting for the end. Gracious God, Mrs. Shaxton, we police, in pursuing a conclusion to a finish, do not often need to turn in the worn track, and throw our all on the kindly effort of a lady!"

He looked in his efficient, urgent way at Mrs. Shaxton, and she stared back at him, half sad, half grave. It seems strange to us that she should have looked so bravely and so steadily at him after what he had done: this efficient, weighty, witty man. He who had given out in a male conclave the crime of her whom he had once professed to protect. That is the least she could have seen—granting to his mind whatever despair of cynicism: a motive the most frenzied and passionate. Was she meeting something in his talk that was not practice with something in her soul that failed at indignation? Did she—who if any there knew the grape on his tongue, whether it were sweet or tasteless—did she know why he had waited upon her any better than did Tipton, who "thought old Daunt was in a funk," or Mrs. Meurice, who "thought his visit meant he was at Matilda's feet" (he had a difficulty about being polite to impotency), or Miss Towerson, who "thought the Superintendent spoke so impressive about the other woman"? Who knows what they knew of one another? What secrets he had not divulged of her, what secret she had kept of him? Here sat our stern Iago who had pushed a husband further on a jealous scent; our yellow Hamlet, who for some reason had not struck when he might—for some reason of three or four. Which had it been a year ago? Which was it now? After all, the young people, and some old ones, are so impressionable; it takes a genius to send them away satisfied as to his dignity!

Ensign Tipton had remarked: "'Pon my life, sir, I think we're all hanging too much on one lady's unselfishness! She has the thankless task of prompting a company of addle-pates—that's the men, ha-ha—the ladies never forget their parts!"

The beautiful Miss Towerson bowed and laughed rather sourly.

"It's quite angelic of you to continue," she said, in a high uneasy voice. "Her la'yship was saying only yesterday—'indeed

you are too ready to exhaust yourself for a lot of thoughtless people.'"

Here Mrs. Meurice surprised the company with one of those masterly upcuts of your swordswoman, who, after hours of fainting, double-fainting, and retreating, has the miraculous power of exploiting, at her need, a blunt, brutal, candid question.

"Now really," said she, "could not Mr. Daunt get his charity elsewhere?" Even for this Daunt was not unready, dropping out quietly and quickly, and with a sort of smiling surrender: "Could the good lady show him any one with the experience and genuine goodness?"

"Indeed, sir," answered the lady, very red, the feather on her poke wildly quivering, "you have spoken truly, sir!"

But was Mr. Daunt very angry? He sat there with (according to Mrs. Meurice, who alone reported it) "a signally fearful pallor on his dapper face." "I am speechless, ma'am," said he, in a small breathless voice, unlike his own. "I know not with what more to urge my words—to rouse Mrs. Shaxton's interest and alarm."

Something in this last troubled the breast of the cold, romantic Ensign, and whipping the floor with the tassel of his cane, he hurried out a banal nothing to the effect that their "Egeria" was leading them all with invisible strings. He could hardly wonder, he said, at Mr. Daunt's decoying the generous lady into his prison. If she can smooth old Shandler's temper ("he's murdering MacIan, you know") and blind young Balsers to his own pathetic eagerness, she can manage the poor creature in the Cascades Factory. "I protest," said he, "madam has us all urbanity and strict attention."

Perhaps he was as surprised as any one at finding himself giving a sort of push to Daunt's wish. It was always difficult to say what was amiss with Daunt—he was always pretty pale—whether he was angry, ill, or what not. Now, he took up the conversation in a quick way. "Man, as a constable," said he, "has little time for polite reading. Yet I have found time for the play. I shall look forward eagerly to the great night." (He always was apt to name "great" occasions in which he had a part.) "An elegant tragedy—but, don't you think, Mrs. Shaxton, a little sad?"

"Indeed," said Matilda, dropping her rather dismayed eyes on the window, "it is enlivening to sit and listen to Helen and Henry Macdonald disputing over the treatment of their love-passages. Even when they agree, I am not fatigued; they do their lines so nobly. As for old Captain Shandlers" (she bent over her work again); "he is the gentlest of men so long as he is permitted to be what he calls 'his frank and untrammelled self'" (there was some laughter), "while Mr. Balsers—indeed I try not to be fatigued with things like ardour."

"I protest—a capricious heroine!" said Daunt, with a glitter-

ing little laugh. "She will not accept her young gallant's addresses except they be offered according to the book. Pray tell me—I am still in the dark concerning Helen Campbell." (He suddenly addressed himself to Miss Towerson) "Is she, dear madam, as good as she pretends? Has she not two strings to her bow? Which—can you honestly tell me—which of the two men really has the lady's heart?"

"I am afraid the bad one, sir," said Miss Towerson, and then went a deep orange colour, and munched her beautiful lip.

Of course, those in the room, and during the afternoon, more than one other Hobarton drawing-room, were inwardly discussing if Mr. Daunt were interested as much as his appeal implied—and how much—in the sickening of the Cascades artist; whether he were not hinting at something as threatening, more weighty, and more personal to Mrs. Hyde-Shaxton and himself, in that rapid, weighty voice. We know it is easy to imagine these things in the conversation of a lady and a gentleman, and more than one laughed at Tipton and Miss Towerson as a pair of "impressionable young people." There are those who will glean a tragedy from every company. In point of fact, it was too disturbing to the composure to allow of making certain. That the very gentleman who had spread the "thing" should be paying his duty to her—sitting there in Mrs. Shaxton's room—even if he had not had that reputation—would have set older people (from fear alone) watching for "indirect intimations." For poor Miss Towerson it was "particularly distressing," since her friendship with Captain Shaxton's wife was "purely a theatrical one," and she had but a bowing acquaintance with Mr. Daunt as a bitter prison big-wig, with an interest in polite entertainment. She had heard of the mock-knightly doings in the stable (knew of the absconder's cousinship with the lady), had been herself on Monday at the old house. She had taken part with Mrs. Hyde-Shaxton and Mr. Daunt in consultation that evening. She had admired with them the "French cornice." She had expressed herself *enchanted* with the size and acoustics of the pretty room. She had been one of those to go to the assistance of Mrs. Hyde-Shaxton in her fainting fit. But only kindness to the invalid had taken her to the rehearsal that morning, and quite naturally she did not wish to figure in anything serious.

Really frightened, "inwardly disturbed," she was kept in her chair by a feeling that Mrs. Shaxton ought not to be deserted until they were certain she was able for it, and was aided in her intention by Mr. Tipton's composure. Though the conversation took a surprising turn, both young people maintained there was more tragedy beneath it than the artist's, and Miss Towerson imagined a note almost of threatening in Mr. Daunt's conversation. How nonplussed he looked at Mrs. Meurice's remark! Mrs. Meurice, herself, went so far as to say he was frightened of the talk he had brought on himself, and was playing

on Mrs. Shaxton's soft-heartedness to countenance him in it. Apart from Miss Towerson's embarrassing position, Hobarton was inclined to laugh at the young people, and consider they were taking things too seriously; and Mrs. Shaxton seemed to think so too, for before they left Mr. Daunt had almost persuaded her to drive down with him to see "poor Daisley's convict." (So rumour said.)

Here, let us add, it was reported by a gentleman of repute late on Tuesday night, as beyond question, that the prisoner's old landlady—Mrs. Quaid—had been approached, and contrary to Hyde-Shaxton's statement, had denied all cognizance or claim in the famous pad, hinting that she remembered distinctly giving it into the possession of Sir William Heans himself; and also that Commandant Daunt, being interviewed by old Chedsey, said sternly that he at least had never seen it, and he was afraid he was not optimistic of its being found among the fly-away tags and tatters of Sir William Heans.

CHAPTER XII

A LAST SHIFT—CARNT'S NEWS

FOLLOWING on our account of the solicitude of Hobarton in the daft Earl of Daisley and the woman in the Cascades, the reader will be startled to learn the contents of Mr. Carnt's letter, which (as he will remember) reached Sir William Heans by the hand of Conapanny on the sad night of his farewell of the Earl—hidden in the womb of the perfume pad. Along with these hurried tidings, we will acquaint him with that other find of an eventful day: the short but very dreadful narrative of Walter Surridge as written with a nail on the leather of the French hat: though Sir William himself, baffled by a day of contrary and clashing eddies, did not actually complete the reading of it till the following morning.

Mr. Carnt's letter, which had caused Heans so much emotion, was written in a tremulous hand, very clear, readable, and fine. It went:—

HONOURED FRIEND,

No time to lose. Saw O'Crone; risked night call at Oughtryn's; bilked at lights and uniforms. This morning heard military had quartered Oughtryn, and deemed dangerous to approach. A *soiree* on you, devil's luck or Heaven's help! Got early from prison, and saw soldier in garden. Caution—caution! At wit's end! Met old landlady near cemetery and stopped her. Asked after you. Old lady very done up; had a visit from police; taken to watch-house to give evidence against constable who had allowed prisoner to slip money through search-room. Man, violent. Maintained stoutly it was a lie. Police want to see relic; gave Daunt a bit of her mind, she did; poor, old, pale cheese. Put it on to you. Told him she'd returned it you at your request. 'Ware heroics!

Old lady had smelt police, however, and was arranging relic's transportation with blackwoman in back yard, who had the thing in her hand. Old black hid it in her dress. Mrs. Conapanny from Orphanage! If she was still in the yard! What of poor old Psalmy Providence now! Life or death, I gasped, and tried Quaid with Daisley's money. "Mr. Daunt's injured me," moans the old lady, "and I've injured him, poor gentleman," and

presently she beckons me in. Old black sitting there when we came through. Weeping. Had a fright. Quaid quiets her down. Mr. Carnt shows gold old black—weighty sum. Cross-wheedles her. No go. Old lady gossips endlessly with her. I agree write short message go inside handkerchief-pad. Old black handles pad, and agrees, God save her soul! Put it to-night in possession of neighbour's pass-holder.

It will here be necessary to explain—what has been only hinted at—that it had been Carnt's plot, in his first moment of sympathy with O'Crone, for a certain stipulated sum (at grim personal risk) to smuggle Madam Ruth out of the factory among a batch of Friday's prisoners committed to his charge for service: in a word, that it should be contrived that madam bribe another woman by a trinket of some sort to let her creep through the gate as an assignee in her place. The connivance or silence of the bribed woman was to be further ratcheted by the promise of a heavy sum to her account, left with Six of the jumble shop after the attempt had been made, whether successful or not—whether or no madam got out of the prison and afterwards escaped the island. Carnt's notion had originated from an episode which had occurred during these "discharges," in which, as we know, he had accepted the duty of the harassing post of conductor. He had actually lost a wild, red-headed girl from a batch of check-aproned women in the main street of Hobarton. On this memorable Friday he had forced the remaining prisoners to run with him incontinently after the culprit, to the immense ticklement of the town. It had, for a while, been his wild intention (with the adventitious aid of Leete's illness) to repeat the accident in favour of Madam Ruth. She had even been communicated with, and had shown a fearful willingness. But this mood of reckless generosity did not survive. On the excuse that the risk to himself was insuperable, but possibly because O'Crone had been injudicious in his disclosures, Carnt decided to throw in his lot with the Earl and the object of his infatuation, and soon, not satisfied with this, insisted that his honoured friend, Sir William Heans, be made a party. O'Crone, having accepted himself with demur, choked altogether over so now dangerous a mouthful as Sir William; indeed, for a while he seems to have dropped all thought of his dangerous design, sailing for Sydney, but returning in a month with a cargo of Indian sherry, much appreciated in the barracks. After this venture, imitating other *savants*, he voyaged less, but rode horseback about the island. He was understood to be preparing a book on the Tasmanian native, and several articles in the local sheets upon this subject, and the flora and fauna—with hints to intending settlers—over the *nom-de-plume* of *Peter Van Diemen*—were keenly criticized as emanating from his pen. His was a sad and curious history. He seemed unable to leave the neighbourhood of these proud

and irritated officials and that unfortunate and violent woman. Yet one more interview with Carnt was followed by yet another sailing, this time among the northern islands, from which he had just returned, bringing back fabulous tales of a community of convicts, backed however with a fine shipload of seal-skins. His dip into this grim industry had coarsened him, or rendered him more strange and reckless. He was back but a few weeks when it was reported he was grown fond of rough company; at any rate, he cared less what company he kept. He seemed strange in his mind, went ungroomed, dressed rough, and cut with looks of anger his old acquaintances.

Once again, as in the early days of his disappointment, he hung about within sketching distance of the factory; haunting the mountains above the prison; or harrying the jailers and prisoners who had access to the gates. And no—he would no longer know his old friends. That was but the truth. He seemed to have forgotten or to nurse a natural injury against the society he had frequented. Thus much for him of whom the town already talked as the “daft departed,” and gentler society as “the poor, distracted Earl of Daisley.” How little is there between the inclusion of a being by a community in the intricate knots of its humanity, and his thrusting, remarkable and solitary, without the ropes! But we, further behind the scenes, have better news of him. In point of fact, he had returned from that island voyage more inclined, for some reason, to the risks of Heans’ company, and it had been to meet him that Carnt had made the appointment, we remember, at Muster-Master-Mason’s Place. We now know how the change in Leete’s illness, which seemed to shatter all plans and hopes, served only to knit the plotters, and whatever the failure of Carnt’s earlier negotiations, we see by this letter that, giving way to desperation, with Captain O’Crone, at the disaster of the woman’s departure, he had, with the Earl’s help (immediately on their meeting at the ale-house) concluded their desperate plan of escape, including himself and Heans, and promising no insuperable risk.

Now for Daisley’s news (he writes.) Daisley comes across *Emerald* north of Flinders Island. *Emerald* full of skins, pumping, and weed-clogged. Stiff noble, and if timeous to agreement, now lying off Vansittart. O’Crone sails to-night, and will signal him to run for the Tamar¹ and hang off West Head on Sunday morning, when he will run in and pick up boat. O’Crone will run west and return. Keeping hull down, he will watch light and flag on 9th, and if Stiff shows red and green, run on out of

¹Ship-way to Launceston.

sailing-route, and pick us up in the inlet north of Gun-carriage. Stiff bungling, Daisley will bring in yacht under beacon.

Signalled the Irishwoman, Kate O'Mara (approached last October, the same bright luminary who has been seven times convoyed to "respectability" by Mr. Carnt, but continues to revolve upon us), passed her madam's bracelet, and got a fresh promise, kind and strong enough, "blast her, she would never need to rob no more!" Madam herself was the difficulty. Thought it was up. She had been growing very sick, and goes to and fro with haggard eyes ever since the verdict. She was at the door on Monday evening when the news got to me, and Shaneson and Hewet went across and spoke with her encouragingly. She looks from one to the other very ill, and I hear her say she's sorry to be leaving the people. At the corner of the gate where I stood, I winked and violently frowned to rouse her to the notion I was going to do it, and she gives me a stare between the warders, but seems too weak to care much. This morning Dr. Goodrich came early, and as he returns through the gate, I step out and ask how she is. He says he must have her up and make her go down to Hospital. I saw her when she descended into the court, and called to Shaneson I'd go after, and say "good-bye" to her. Shaneson won't permit it. At one o'clock Major Ellis brought the Launceston doctor and a French traveller and Mr. Carnt to show them round. At Hospital door Matron takes them in, and I see through crack Madam Ruth folding nightdresses near door. I call out, "Hope you're better, ma'am, and can I wish you good-bye?" She looks up dazy, but doesn't move, and Matron says to her kindly, "she may go and say good-bye to Mr. Carnt." French gentleman much interested in her hair—in the pathos of it—asks the story. She came to door not very willingly, and before she could speak I cautioned her and told her what was to do. I thought she'd fall. Egad, I felt her weight on the door! "Go on, Mr. Carnt," says she, "I can hear you. I'm sensible of all you say," and then she says, "I'll be fit for it, but the journey's very heavy." Presently, "I think I may die," says she. "We must all die—even the worst of us—that's a comfort," says Mr. Carnt. Sympathetic Frenchman, with tears in his eyes, moves a little further into dormitory. Pathetic parting scene, for *Galignani* or the *Daily News*! She will manage to be delayed in the dormitory till late in afternoon. When she returns, she will stand no risk of being occupied in kitchen or above stairs. I will send Kate O'Mara upstairs to inform Orderly women are below, and while man is in with Leete, Madam Ruth will exchange shawl and apron, and she will come quickly down as he returns. Poor Kate will lock herself in madam's room, and slip back to chamber, but if madam's companion is there, or attempts to give alarm, she will hold her there "all night." God be kind to her incurable generosity, and give her heaven in the diamonds! I don't know what she'll catch for it!

If pass gates, (concludes the letter), leave madam with steward from *Quenosabia* who has room in Collins Street. Madam changes; Carnt leaves charges, and changes. Rev. Padsdow, in dyed wig and grey whiskers, goes to Tanner's stables, orders carriage for gentleman and lady to wait at Orphanage, and pays fare to Bridgewater. Rev. Padsdow and sister (in heavy black bonnet and fair curls) may be joined by friend at Orphanage (30 past 6), and drive comfortably to join coach at Bridgewater. Dismiss hackneyman. Pick up night-coach to Launceston. For Hêaven's sake (and hers), unless hard put to it, don't join carriage at Orphanage! Mustn't peril the lady. Jarvis knows Sir William. Coach leaves Ship Inn 7.10. Take old bay and ride to the ferry (or across it in morning, as if you were going message to Oughtryn's farm at Bagdad), and join coach as consulting-surgeon. Dr. Charles Chandos. If hard put to it, come to carriage—and may the great Architect see to the rest. The above is compendious but final.

Believe me, honoured friend, in considerable trepidation,

Yours very faithfully,

JARVIS CARNT."

Perhaps the fact most to be remarked in Carnt's plot, as indeed in most of the prison-breakings not fictional to which humanity has put its mind, is not the precaution painfully taken, but the risk indifferently assumed. Either man is a much more gallant and cynical animal than the novelists suppose, or than the reading public will accept. "Bah," he seems to say, with his gambler's eye on vacancy, "even if the free bourn be won, the hated bondage put off, are we so much further than from one prison to another—is the grave any deeper to be dug?" And hardly plotting, they seem barely to go beyond a precaution, the rest being left to mother-wit, chance, or human frailty. In the novel, on the contrary, the pining captive is shown planning horribly for the "happy ever after"; miserly of the risk to life and precious body; grasping at the heavenly chance with avarice and matchless pains. Nor does your novelist allow for the private bitterness, the little disease, the sense of humour of his jailers, on which many an historic captive has broke ward. No—in the convict Carnt's plan of escape from Hobarton like that somewhat resembling it, and used twelve years after by the exile, John Mitchell, questionably, painfully, and disastrously, yet as the ante-chamber to a yet more reckless and quite successful plot—I say, in the plans of Carnt, inscribed so trig and tremulous on a cancelled pass, seemingly so tentative, and involving issue for at least two parties final and fatal as a gun-shot, we see the complot of the human being, behind a veneer of stratagem, playing gallant with his life to a singular degree. It will be noted that a similar idiosyncrasy is to be found in the older document

before us, the narrative of the convict Surridge, though in this case a something sullen in the character of the stone-mason makes him take his risks for purposes deeper and more dread. We may imagine Sir William's feelings when that night he fetched and opened the old cocked hat in the breakfast-room.

CHAPTER XIII

SURRIDGE'S NARRATIVE

(Written possibly with the ink-bag of a squid)

HERE'S to you, Carrow, and you, Black Derrick, or Hammes, or any other desperate man. If you ever return, see what it came to, and if not you, for I know not what they'll do now, some poor wretch, wild enough to try and slim enough to break his luck. The great crack was marked above the mouth with a lock and broken key by Samuel Jallet who fell sick working of it in 1804. And he died in the May of that year. Read how I came to finish it; it will do you a service. I was one of thirty suspects deported from Parramatta to aid in forming a settlement at Rest-down, and lucky I thought myself, for when 600 armed men rose on March 4th, at Castle Hill—those on the roads, and on the public buildings, and the farm servants—I heard the settlers and soldiers, who knew they meant to overpower them, was ruthless.¹ A year after, we came across to the Camp, and joined those at work on the building. At first we were set at work in the timber-carriage, and housed in the cave. When I joined there was great activity, the precinct walls and the walls of the cottage being near finished, and the hospital roofed, besides many other wooden houses. As I was a suspect, and the news from the ponds made them fearful, they would not let me work at my trade, though I appealed more than once to the taskmaster and also Sergeant King. Now I became angry and could not forget it, because some made believe to boast I was no mason. To prove the jack-pudding out, I cut an image of Carlet, and one of James Craw, on the cave walls, and later a threat for mate Moreman against King, and one, because no attention was paid me, and for the private hate I had of his person, against the fine gentleman, his Honour. This served me well, for the semblance being good, and it being noted (his Honour himself examining it while we were up the mountain), I was taken down and put before him, when being a fine young man, they showed

¹ This must be the rebellion of which Mr. Holt leaves record.

me lenity, and put me in the way of certain ornamentations for the cottage.

His Honour was pleased to be patron to my skill, though he was impatient in his manner, and gave me a new shirt, for though it was hot, we mustn't go in trousers; and Mr. Gargrave, seeing me perspiring over the Basin, gave me an old dress hat for my night-cap. They put me from one thing to another as I showed myself able for it. Together with the Basin, I did a mantel-shelf after the Roman, and two fine gate-posts. The stone was soft, and while I was sorry for that when they thought them praiseworthy, fearing their duration short, I was pleased at the artifice when slighting words were given. Oons, they were pleased to have me try the impossible, but it must be done after their mind! Many a piece I spoiled by anger or despair. I forget blame very hard. (The last sentence in the parchment was uncertain.) Here then I've lived for two years, with a year on the Hospital *Acrotoria*. At first I carried out the suggestions of the gentlemen, who made a hobby of me, but during the past year, when supplies gave out, I had less attention. Firstly, I was put to some designs for the church, and left to devices of my own, among them the figure of the Virgin which I married in a fit of temper with Mountgarret, who was pleased to think the trumpeter more a Frenzy than a King's soldier. Master Collins came early into the mansion with three servants, the mistress his sister, that little black princess whose father had been shot at Rest-down, and young Spars, who acted as his Honour's foot-boy. The young Jack-a-lent had a running tongue with him, and stood off me except to poke fun at my handiwork or rage at his Honour (which he would do as soon as clean his buckles), but the Arab girl—the same who'd tripped it through the roofless mansion in her red and spangles—I often caught her flashing eye, and one morning she came where I was, she did, feeling the cottage flowers, and peeking at the hills—(it was the day we heard Boney was defeated, and his Honour had Joseph powder him)—asked me a question, she did, and stayed with me all morning, but was scolded in doors by the worshipful Master Collins, who came out with some officers of the Government. So it was dope between me and her. She looked for me as I looked for her. Never by me in the garden at that time, but staring at one another by the hour round a bush or door, or at a window trying to comb her Arab hair.

Late next year I was removed, but presently I was back again, and the old man put some reading in my way, as he said I was very ignorant of life. I took to reading what I was given in the cave, and at midday. I suppose she saw what I was at, and soon she had her book too. I saw her book was covered similar to mine, and as the boy had become easier with me, and had confessed he had had her for his sweetheart but had been caught molesting of her, I told him—what I now think he had all along perceived.

—of our partiality, and he agreed to exchange the books, mine containing a piece of my neckerchief on which I had written of a little wound in my hand. Joseph Spars, after some delay, brought a reply from her, "Love poor Walter always!" written painful in her book; and though I considered this reckless, and cautioned him against repeating it on his Honour's books, Spars wouldn't have me destroy the page since it might be missed, but he would lay some ink over it. Thus passed May and June, our attachment growing, and very agonising, and Spars enjoying the mischief of go-between. His Honour was hellish impatient and punished me for malingering, and she was scolded for too much application to her book. I believe now there was disgust and suspicion over us. Her pretty sprightliness was going, and I was insane with longing for speech. I thought upon a plan to be near her, and this was carried out. In these days when we are on salt pig and seaweed, and little of that,¹ his Honour's sister, Mrs. Collins, will send what little fresh can be spared to the Hospital, and this Moicrime continued to be allowed to carry. In a hollow of the ground, on the other side of the wall, she would sit down. Against and topping the wall, where I worked, was left a bushy tree, and in its leaves I would pull my stone when it was sunny, out of sight of the Marine at the gate. When she was there, she called over the wall. Whereon I climbed over inside the tree and she sat for a few moments in my arms. We had not met more than twice in this way, when as we sat together, I saw the glazed hat of the Marine over the bushes, and he took us both in, she a-sobbing. I got nothing for this, though some have got fifty lashes. They let me alone; I seemed forgotten. In the afternoon his Honour came out where I was, his top-boots covered with mud from riding. He had a whip in his hand, but there was not a word said. And presently he went away. I know not now why they did nothing against me. It was three days before Spars came near, and I heard his Honour had sent the girl away. Perhaps it had been better for all I had been punished. I could never forget my angel.

A night or so after, Spars told me she was in the Hospital. She was not handled severe, and ran about where she would. One morning he saw and spoke with her. She was in the paddock. They had cut down the bush I had used for a ladder, but along towards the Cottage there was a little tree growing, about two feet up, and behind this a gully-hole, cut after the wall was built. In brooding over my bereavement, I thought I could use this on some special occasion. I got soon to the hole, and found it looked also into our hollow. Spars agreed to catch her, and tell her the date of the assembly extraordinary, when she could come across to the wall. This he did; and on that morning, about

¹ The great famine.

eleven, I heard her voice whisper and found her hand lying in the drain. Here we spoke five times in November and December Spars watching the muster-roll and keeping me informed, and me, since he would risk no more for my promises, jotting dates in my book, and planting that in the gully-hole for her to find. We were discovered one morning. Very sudden her hand was snatched from mine, and though she made no noise, she drew breath grimly. Presently she said to me, "Walter, I will wander by again." After there was a terrible upbraiding over the wall, but behind me, on the path by the windows, a voice said huskily: "Surridge, you are discovered." I looked round, and there was Dr. Mountgarret, as he often called in, with his specimen-case and gun.

When I say that I was persuaded of his worship's threatening voice, my act of wickedness may be better understood. But though I knew that I was to go to the geers,¹ little did I anticipate he would do this with the girl. When I knew that she was to go with Ondia, which I did after two days in these caves, where I was alone but for the nights, my five mates being gone to the works, it was my wicked intention to revenge if I couldn't save her. I had his Honour's book, and in this I wrote a letter to the girl, and persuaded Peter Naut—who was in the garden—to pass it to Spars, and so he did. Now I left my mates by means of the great crack, which Jallet, when the place was building, had discovered by the wind (for he lay below), but since he had died and Bastien had been freed, the two of us, slim enough, had not troubled at the night-work. Now a nail and a stone was provided me, and I set to work at it, but in my agony not content with night-work, ascended on the fifth afternoon, and was trapped there by Mr. Carlet, the taskmaster, who came in for some tools, and calling among others Sergeant King, he searched the caves pretty thoroughly, though for some reason desisting sooner than was expected; nor were the mates questioned beyond the preliminary investigation, the famine hanging heavily upon every one, and he running to a conclusion that I had slipped out among the Government men. Now being trapped, and much sympathy with my grief, two of my mates agreed I should work on out, they drawing me up a little food from their allowance, which was done by means of a chain from the timber-carriage which they were using as a drying-horse, and a running haul of thongs, which, that I might have my hands free, we swivelled on my anklet. Here I worked for four days, not daring to come down, my two mates able to spare me little. On the fifth morning, my mates were taken out as usual, and never returned. For two days and a night I saw nothing of my mates, but heard the hosting of the troops. I now had the neck widened to about

¹ Triangles.

a foot, but was very thirsty, and feared if I did not get down, I would be unable to move. Having secured the thong by my dagger-knife, I came down about nine that night and got a little water from the jugs. Though the house was lit, as I saw through the port-hole, the court was empty of them who had the order or habit of assembling. At four o'clock on the following, all being quiet, and I being near through the work, yet troubled much with hunger, I again descended. I had not been long down, when I heard his Honour scolding, and looking into the court, saw the foot-boy leading away his horse. I waited there till Spars returned, and spoke to him through the port-hole. After a while he approached me, and when he knew who it was, he promised to get me what he could. This he did, returning with a bottle of wine and some fragments of bones and cheese. As for bread, he said the prisoners were all released into the bush for what they could find, the soldiers and settlers guarding the Camp.¹ He had been caught taking his share and had been put on Carlet's back. I asked him if the girl was gone, and he said, with a laugh, Master Collins and the lady wouldn't see her again. She was gone with blacks to Cross Marsh. I knew then I could not save her, whereat I spoke wickedly against his Honour and the lady; and he, laughing, backed away from me. Now I called to him, threatening him also, and presently he came near, and said if I wanted out why didn't I come? On my enquiring what he meant, he informed me the door was stapled only, the padlock hanging open in the ring. I ordered him to lift it out, but he said no, he wouldn't. I then asked how I could use it, and he said, with a stick and a piece of thong, I might jerk out the padlock, and lift the hasp. I thanked him, but he made a wicked oath, running weakly to the house.

So in my mischievous anger I did not wait till dark, but with a small double hoe, jerked out the padlock, and with a horn of it, succeeded in raising the hasp. Half an hour after Spars had deserted me, I had passed the bolt, and crept out in the quiet to the butt, where I had a drink of water. The door beside was open, and I came into the passage. People were moving in the maids' portion. Through the door on the left, I saw his Honour sitting on a sofa before the fire. Behind him a Persian shawl and some pistols were on the table. Also wine and cheese. In my grief I would not shoot him, but kill him with my body's strength. Yet it must be done silent, or it might be frustrated. Now the wicked one reminded me what I had been reading in the volume of the *Plutarch*, how King Hannibal was killed with a cloth, and few knew how he died. So removing my shoes, I came behind and took the shawl. And I put it over his face, and when he sprang forward, some fell into his neck above his

¹ Dispersal for Food Order of this period.

neck-cloth, and so I stifled him against the sofa-back. And that he might look as if he died as he sat a-reading, I picked up the cocked hat, and put it upon him, and under his hand I put a book that lay on the sofa by his grey pantaloons. Presently after I drank some wine from the decanter and took a little cheese from his plate, and as I took them I saw through the window Mr. Carlet, the taskmaster, approaching the back gate. Taking the pistols, I ran out of a door to the front, but was stopped before Mrs. Collins and a maid-servant. I then came out at the back, hoping to get down the garden behind her Ladyship, and at the corner, past the kitchen, there was Spars holding white beside the wall, and down the garden, Mr. Beaumont, with a nosegay for my lady. I now returned along the kitchen wall, and thence I went across, into the cave, hardly before they came. I think I was not seen by any (saving the foot-boy); but one, attracted, I suspect, by the door, came and looked into the cave, while I lay in Jallet's cell under the crack. He entered one of the cells. He went away throwing to the door, as some one screamed from the Cottage. Again some one came up in a quarter of an hour, amid the hubbub (when my accident had befallen me), and I heard him drop the hasp and turn the lock.

But God had not done with me, and so I come to my miserable end. As I pressed through the waist of the great crack, a pistol, which I had put behind in my band, exploded in the lower part of my back, and I got with difficulty to my hat and tool, my legs being gone in a paralysis. When I had stanch'd it, and felt I was not immediately to die, nor yet in such pain, that I could not do something with my hands for a mate or the prisoner, who, like Samuel Jallet, may yet fall upon the secret in these rents—before this I was moaning and making much of my difficulty, and while thus, I depose as I lie here a verily writing, I heard some one come lightly upon the flags, who listened at the hole, and when I cried out for some water, saying 'I was dying, stayed a while and at last went away, and I have not heard him come again. Who is this who came neither to aid me nor to bring the thing to the light? Oh me, I do not believe . . . so young! Whom have I killed? I will shoot him through the crack. (The last words were crossed out in the original MS. and made illegible, though from the faintness of the second ink they could again be read.)

CHAPTER XIV

THE GREEN-ROOM

Give ower your House, my lady fair,
Give ower your House to me.

Percy Reliquis.

"We have a horrid monster here!" said Sir William, standing aghast in the breakfast-room, with the hat before him on the table. It was an ashen spring morning, and, outside, the east wind fought along the wall with the guardian trees, or sprang in, struggling with the shivering shrubs. Bless me, the poor little statue seemed to be bugling in a *mélée*!

Sir William, before his breakfast, the remains of which were upon the table, had crossed to the stable without seeing their unwelcome guest, but on his return heard his confident gabble over a shrill protest from Oughtryn at an open chamber window, and saw his long face stoop and look out. He looked indolent and uneasy, and gave Heans only a half look, as it were, out of his shouted conversation, but at the same instant, his hand had moved slyly over the window-sill, and a pebble shot over the flags not more than two feet in front of Heans' trousers. Trivial as was the action, and chance as may have been the aim, Heans, vainly struggling with his dread knowledge of the fellow, and his own private excitement, returned to the room much perturbed by it. A little brooding over and gathering of yesterday's incidents, and he was still inclined to the belief the man was plaguing him personally; and a disquiet began to possess him lest his evident enmity might put a new hazard in three difficult days. Yet it was strange. Neither the soldier nor any one else could know of Carnt's scheme, the ink of which was hardly dry. Had he (Heans) let anything slip in the stable? 'Pon his soul, he considered, he had been most circumspect! He knew life and men, or at least enough, as Carnt would have put it, "for a tolerable defence"; along with this, that one experience of his capture, or the common infirmity of the cabined mind, had instilled in him a rooted scepticism in the good intentions of his keepers; and seeing life and men in their carelessness, envy, selfishness, weakness, sickness, or cynicism, he yet paled, his hair stiffened, and his hand clenched, at the thought of this ruffian and evil-liver,

this treacherous go-between and murderer, loosed upon the quiet house, and, according to Oughtryn, barely pretending his humility. Sir William naturally asked himself why was such a one sent upon so domestic a task? Had "Spars" had the cunning to hide his nature through these thirty years, and valve his poison out of drill-hours? Bah, these men knew what men were! Had he made for himself a sort of work-a-day, wicked trustiness? Such men were valuable to their superiors. Was he the Black-adder to some official Bothwell? "God help me," said Heans, in self-reprimand, "I am thinking too sourly! The man is ill, and had lost the company of the baggage, his wife. This scrubbing, stable-cleaning, and festooning a bower of roses for my Lady Franklin is by way of a relaxation for a sick wolf." Yet, by Heaven, it did not sound rightly! And if true, it was hardly fair of fate! Ah, coincidence, coincidence, thou factor in our human or animal doings, as much to be reckoned with as the most cunning and best calculated snare! Coincidence had summoned him (Heans) to Flat Top Tier on the day before his first beggarly run for it; coincidence, it was possible, had brought this sly ruffian to the house three days before the new attempt! With whatever powers, or motive, he was come—were he nothing more than the scrawl upon his order—or were he interpreting, after the manner of a disreputable flunkey, some hostile feeling of superiors rather implied than expressed (for Heans was half persuaded there was mischief in it), Spafield, this time, was not having it all his own way. Coincidence, or something sterner, had sent the pitiable ruffian back to Captain Collins' cottage.

Up to the present we have mentioned no names because the implications in Sir William's letters up to this moment carefully refrain from doing so. We prefer to follow the trend of his mind as he records it. Whatever the reason for Heans' silence, it says a great deal for Mr. Daunt that the former did not credit him with so much dislike for himself that he would descend to sheer evil-doing against him. Does it not say a great deal for human nature that it so reluctantly admits that in a fellow-creature? Hardly do we credit our friend with "running cunning"; at worst we guard against the possibility. And yet, how countless are the catastrophes in the histories occasioned by man's reluctance to relinquish a fellow-being into the hooded den of the wholly-wicked! Watch us trying to explain him (or her) to the last—lending him this, forcing that upon him; fitting upon him these or those little cloaks of weakness or forced probity or hypocrisy or harmless failure; searching round for something—anything—any human rag that will make him seem of us while he is here.

* * * * *

There were some early arrivals in the morning: three staid maids with stooping heads and beaver bonnets, accompanied by

three grooms holding to their hats: all laden with parcels. The latter made several journeys to and from the gate, the maids remaining and filling the passages with conversation. About nine o'clock Heans left his room intending to return to the stable, but as he stepped into the yard he thought he could hear voices within the cave, and next moment his attention was called (by the head and cape of the driver appearing over the gate) to the fact that a fly was drawn up outside the wall. After a few minutes' wait, during which he assured himself there were people in the stable, he stepped across. He felt if he was to escape out of the place during the week he must not shrink from the routs of grooms and gentlemen which would assuredly throng it. As he went, he noted that all the windows of Collins' Chamber were thrown wide, and in one a woman was importantly flapping her duster amid echoes of further activity. Arriving in the wind at the stable door, he found two men in talk, with backs turned, some way in while the man Spafeld, quick and bold, in red coat and shako, was pitchforking the hay from the nearer stalls, and labouring with it into the murk of the innermost. Sir William made out as he came in that it was Oughtryn and Mr. Daunt who were talking there: the former in his best oiled boots and buttoned coat, very bland and obsequious; Daunt somewhat shrinking and lost, in a grey cloak and low-crowned hat. The latter advanced along immediately he saw Heans, something of the old, immaculate briskness in his manner. "Sir William," he said, with quite a pleasant little smile, "come, do not be annoyed with us for making free here. We really must stable the young actors. It is just civil. Oughtryn will send away his nags for the 7th and give us stable room."

"Why yes, Honour," said Oughtryn, as if repeating some arrangement for the benefit of Heans; "I'll lead the horses down on Thursday to Deal's or Stully's—my own self."

"'Pon my word, sir," Daunt went on, "the young actors are in agonies and hysterics over stable and rooms, and though I will yield in the matter of your sitting-room, if you will allow me, I will on no account permit you to be incommoded about the other. Now, sir, grant us this much latitude for the great night."

Heans, though distressingly taken aback by the news that the horses were to be removed, and by Oughtryn's caution that he was not to aid in it, said steadily enough he yielded the matter into Oughtryn's hands; if he consented, he would remove from his room. Surprised, no doubt, at Daunt's mellowed manners, and troubled by his presence so early in the morning, he looked him in the face an instant; after staring across at Spafeld, who was moving quickly in and out of the dusk, gripping a pitchfork used only to a pair of ancient cotton gloves. Oughtryn now approached them in his tall small hat, somewhat crestfallen, yet blinking blandly. He doubtfully tapped one hand with a very small twig which it was his habit to carry in the other when off

duty (and with which he might be seen bending in the yard, reprimanding cat and dog). "Changing the straw," observed he, in a manner somewhat sly and aloof, "for the conveniency."

"Sir William Heans is very civil about the sitting-room," said Daunt, pitching it back at the other in a shrugging way. "Half the world cares little enough how it disturbs the other half, I'm afraid, and we've all been very greedy after the old house. 'Pon my word, there's so little new going on! I want you and Sir William Heans to understand I won't stick out for any room you want undisturbed. The ladies get their girlish fancies about a thing, and though as we get older, confound it! we are easier weakened, I don't wish to be run into an injustice. That is not one of my faults. At least, not one I boast of. It is, of course, very amiable of you about your room, sir" (turning full on Heans). "Now, come, shall I see if I can place the men's green-room somewhere else?"

He looked at Sir William with a sort of pleasant steadiness, to which, perhaps, his greying hair added an impression of age and compunction. "You see, I am here now," he said, "to do what I can."

Sir William stood sitting upon his cane, and swinging his glass. His tails flapped about his rather *passé* trousers, and he listened, his head fallen a little, baleful and cold. If he was perplexed by so much gentleness, he was not moved by it. "Do you mean, sir, you would be kind enough to secure me the other room?" he asked, with some indifference. "Indeed, sir, you are highly civil. My privacy—I cannot trouble you so much——"

"We and Life grow older, sir," said Daunt, with a little, comical shrug; "it becomes more difficult to keep from injustice. So much outside selfishness, Sir William Heans—so much egoism! And each one of us with the private career he is husbanding, or indeed ceased to husband. What wonder if we grow bitter with each other—place justice as a habit? Now take us along, Master Oughtryn" (he touched Oughtryn swiftly with his fashionable rattan), "show me to Sir William's room. Let me see it and any other you can replace it with, if possible downstairs. Let us find, if we can, some way to leave your servant alone." (Again he looked Sir William in the face.) "Now, will that do?" he said. "I do not forget my duty to you or any one?"

Sir William said: "Certainly, certainly, be pleased to come to my room." He turned away rather sharp, as if he would lead the way, but turning back, "Upon his honour," he said, "it would not be an irremediable sacrifice to lose the room for one night!" He would not have the ladies troubled in their pleasure. "No, no, let me serve you," said Daunt; and again touching Oughtryn, moved past Heans into the door. Oughtryn, picking his way out dark and bewildered, called high, "The gentry might have the office under the stairs, given they could persuade the

women. It was their sewing-room, and they was jealous of it."

Daunt, as he was caught into the wind beside Sir William, hoarsed, "Ah, the women! If you cannot harness them, man, I can't. Would they," he turned and cried back, "would they be good enough to accept some compensation from Sir William Heans and myself? Has not Miss Abelia an elegant taste in old Six's china?"

"Ah, she's one that knows her own," said Oughtryn, feeling out of the stable, sly and subdued; "and a maid to pick and refuse, for all her unbeauteous appearance. Their domestic looks belies 'em."

Heans, as he hurried, yet endeavoured not to hurry, in front of Daunt, seemed even more sorely hit than the occasion warranted. Twice he restrained his too eager pace, turning mellowly upon Daunt, but his face looked chilled. His glass he put up and dropped. For one thing, among the moment's burden of contraries, he had, just now, experienced a confirmation of his conviction of the soldier's private ill-feeling, and was trying, in his mind, to resolve away its nasty secrecy before he got into his room. As he turned out of the door before the Commandant, a glance back into the scarred cave (one of those glances which elude our vigilance) had passed over Oughtryn, fair upon Spafield, first his tall shako, and then his Tartar face, stooping in the dusk behind the partition of the hay stall, and staring over it through the spread fingers of his right hand. He was looking at himself in a cold, open, private way. It seemed, at the least, that the villain, by this vile old sign, was endeavouring to make plain between them his sly and unappeasable aversion, and intention to further it in a double manner. Sir William could not pass it.

The wind was loud in the gum and the budding shrubs about the yard, but up upon the cliff it seemed as if it would uprear the struggling things and fling them down. The day remained ashen. Heans had gathered his forces as the three pushed across, clinging to their hats. As he unlatched the little panelled door, letting it blow open, he half-turned, asking "if he might enquire" (somewhat cavernously and inscrutably) "whether the soldier fellow in the stable was the man for a delicate position?"

"Indeed!" said Daunt, his voice echoing in the passage as he went in. "Oughtryn was interested to ask me the same question! Pooh, sir, you can't expect soft-sawder from a soldier. Put up with the fellow for the week . . . now, which door?"

He moved past him along the passage, and opened the door of the darkened sitting-room. Daunt entered, with Heans at his heels; and some seconds afterwards Oughtryn came into the door and wiped his boots, somewhat sinister and mild. Sir William stopped beside the nearer window, his face sharp and still against the rioting garden. Daunt, who with his hat off looked old and pale, stared about him smiling sternly, almost

kindly. He looked about at the saucer table, the bead chair, the meek bird, the Roman figure, the mantel-piece. A slight look of amusement came into his grizzled face, as if his thoughts were in two places; however, he said softly: "If you wish, gentlemen, I will see the man, Spafeld, before I go, and explain, somewhat, the position to him. They are apt to kick above orders. It is not so simple." He then told Oughtryn to take the man on Thursday with the horses—"keep him occupied." Sir William ("in sheer fright," he tells us) was asking himself why had Daunt engineered his way into the room; was he about to ask familiarly, or demand, or search by force of his official power, for the article which he supposed it to hide—that under the marble angel on the right of the clock? He should not have it——

Nay, let us believe Sir William in his tempered doubt of men, in his trepidation, cold hope, and frantic fear, maligned Daunt. He had merely come, in that sort of repentant mood to which we are all subject, to make his way easier for the old *beau garçon*. What more natural! As he said, "We grow older!" and yet, in his evident striving after a measure of tolerance, of his evident "older-ness," and mellowing, he could not hide the faint impression, he invariably conveyed, of dark familiarity and faithlessness.

"Aha, Charles Oughtryn," says he, with his hissing little laugh, "never again attempt to persuade me you are a dark disciplinarian. Tipton and the young fellows must have heard of the room. Upon my faith, I don't often find the prisoner and his master on such terms—though enough begin so!"

"Manifestly more commodious for a gentleman than when you were last here," said Oughtryn, bowing low, and speaking rather huskily. "My prisoner and I seldom quarrel, and he has done his best to give my daughter some elegance of polishing. His presence here 'as been no trouble to us, and it has been my plan to put about him such articles of magniloquence as would not be faddling to a gentleman. Where's all the money, you ask me? It brings me little. But by these things, you see a gentleman suitably found." As he spoke he slipped into his beard a surreptitious plug.

"Ah," said Daunt, still gravely amused, "this is handsome of you. Consult the next gentleman's taste as well, and he will never grow restless. He will spend his existence with you. Indeed, a dazzling wall-paper! Isn't the mantel-piece slightly overburdened? And these books—what does Mr. Fielding, the writer, say: 'I had rather enjoy my own mind than the fortune of any other man!' Indeed, Sir William, everything has been granted you, it seems, except two things: resignation and undisturbed possession. What is the good of all the splendour in the world without them? No, we certainly must not disturb you. I must see what can be done with these young gentlemen."

At something in what he said, Heans' nerve seems to have

failed him, and even while he was speaking, he left the window—too pale for mere indignation—and putting himself before the fire (Daunt being at the bottom of the table) removed a pair of grey cotton gloves, and laid them somewhat aimlessly upon the mantel-piece, beside one of the marble figures. Had he recollected who was there speaking so pleasantly—one of the sharpest policemen in Tasmania? With a hand leaning by them, he turned inward a little to the fire, a varnished boot upon the fender, yet standing in a grey chilled way, as if his shrunken finenesses of costume were too thin for this windy weather.

"Indeed," he said, in a hoarse yet gracious voice, which he seemed to strive in vain to keep steady and aloof, "you are right of my resignation of mind. I would cut and run to-morrow if I could. Well, sir" (with a short, trembling laugh), "take the room if you desire it. Take my pretty ornaments for your *bal paré* and deck the old Chamber with them. Take my clock, my bird, my green lustres, my two ladies with the doves." He catalogued them, staring at them one by one. Afterward he turned and looked at Daunt, very cowed, grey and gracious. "Yes, let them have the room, sir," said he. "Take anything you want." Daunt gave a little glance up at him—a sort of mournful, bitter glance. "Come, I know you, Heans," said he, "better than you know yourself. You are an irreconcilable man. 'Pon my faith, sir, you hug it to yourself! I should never be surprised at any sudden recklessness from you. A report! A catastrophe! Ah, it is Sir William Heans! Just as A said—just as B prophesied! Tut—tut—it delights you, I think, not to be circumspect, and help yourself. I am persuaded you shall not pleasure yourself with a fresh mortification and hug a new reason for reckless speaking—not by my word, if we can fob Tipton off! Come, sir, you will be yet frank enough to admit with your old master Oughtryn that our care of you is as just as our punishment. Here is one who is rich from his firm belief in our good intentions." He turned to Oughtryn, adding: "Still quite unassailable, Oughtryn, I am sure?" And he laughed gravely, but how sternly he said it, with a parting glance into the room and round at the two windows, his pale little hand upon the table! Suddenly, while he spoke, the noise of someone knocking rattled into the wind, and Oughtryn, while he backed to the door, remarked, "since Mr. Daunt was pleased to ask, he was the same as ever he was." But as he felt for the handle, his air was puzzled and pale. He added, in his shrill voice: "I look for highness from my masters. Honours, but a gentleman cannot always show his hand. I've suffered little and gained much from my masters, gentry, but by them as to which my masters delegates their mastering I've suffered hell. A gentleman cannot give his mastering."

When he opened the door, the woman herself was standing against it, her sleeves up, her massed hair awry, but her air as

immovable and remote as usual. For the moment she seemed to personify rather a beckoning than a patient Fate. Ignoring both Oughtryn and Daunt (over whom she passed a blind look), she informed Heans, slow and direct, "that Mrs. Quaid was outside about a fur coat—a perliß—and would prefer not to go without it."

Heans coldly excused himself to Daunt (who turned politely to the window), and moving to the writing-press, unlocked and removed from its shelves a parcel, which he brought to the door, and was about to give it into the woman's hands, when Daunt flashed about, crying: "Hold, I beg; this is pure pride! Allow me to protest against what I think Sir William Heans is doing. Do not, Sir William Heans. Do not let that coat go out of your hands. Foolish gentleman, you do this before me to irritate me. No, come—come. For Heaven's sake, pity my position, sir, and let me feel a little happiness in thinking I did this! I have—we all have—seen this handsome coat. I know what you are doing, sir. Let me—let me (so much a stranger now) do this small act of help. Come—please."

He advanced and put his glove on the parcel—his eyes on Heans' face. Sir William was at the instant about to give it to the woman. Daunt's air was stern, comradely, and appealingly.

"Ah—ah, highly civil, sir. No, no, certainly not!" said Heans, ceremoniously parting with the parcel, and Daunt, snatching back his glove, turned again to the window. Oughtryn, standing to attention to the left of the door, and only occasionally turning his quid, seemed as if he would have interjected some explanation of the peculiar delicacy of Sir William's affairs, but he did not, his strained eyes returning towards Daunt only more crestfallen. He did at last say, as if unable to keep entirely aloof: "Appears to have been an exchange of them books by your 'and, sir, between Sir William Heans and the old 'ag." Daunt possibly was wiser, remembering the ring given to Shaxton in the stable. He remarked, however, "Gad, for these books!" and gave a lame laugh as he fingered them: adding "These old women will cadge your very handkerchief from your pocket. The reward is inadequate." He thereupon wheeled about, asking to be shown the room under the stairs, and turning to Heans, added: "Now, Sir William Heans, let us see what can be done with the *beau sexe*. Let me beg your veteran help. Oughtryn, where shall we find your daughter?"

They walked immediately into the small passage, Oughtryn leading. As they turned into the larger, they were met by the woman, returning with something in her hand. Without pause or hesitation she strode past Daunt and Oughtryn, and approaching Heans, gave into his hand a handful of small articles, with the loud remark that "Mrs. Quaid had found them in the pocket of the coat, and 'was frightened they might incriminate her.'" Heans, who saw even in the half-light of the passage that one

was a folded silk handkerchief of a kind once used by himself, immediately placed that, and the papers that accompanied it, in his pocket, laughing his thanks. ("Very remiss of me," thought he, though he was certain he had emptied the coat on the previous night, and he did not think he could have mislaid in that coat one of a set of valued handkerchiefs now for some time regretted. In the flash of his reflection he had thoughts of a new message. At the same time he did not think that Carnt would have sent him anything of importance in this reckless manner, nor the old woman have passed it in with the Commandant in his very room—unless, indeed, it was, for some reason, urgent. Could it refer to Daunt himself?)

Daunt, after a quiet stare, turned and walked on.

"Where shall we find the girl, Oughtryn," he asked again; "in the kitchen here, or enlisted among the helpers?" He spoke sharply.

"Where is Abelia?" Oughtryn demanded of the woman. "The gentleman has a petition to put. Is she hiding in the kitchen?"

"No," answered the woman, giving a glance back into the kitchen. "Maybe she is in the Chamber. Abelia—she's been sickening for the horses, and dislikes the presence of a stranger with them. She's been hanging to and fro all morning, plucking up her courage. Maybe she's taken heart and gone over with an apple."

Sir William exclaimed: "Not in the stable!"

Immediately the woman led the way along the passage, and into the hall, from which the drugget and furniture had been removed, and upon the wooden floor of which two elderly servants knelt before pails. The back door was closed, but the front was open, showing the ashen sky and some furniture grouped about the stone sphere. The three men stopped in the hall, but the woman went on into the Chamber, quickly returning with the information that Abelia was not there, and might be in the garden. From where they were standing, there was visible the south side of the Chamber, in which, among other preparations, curtains were being hanged, their pretty blue folds ballooning in the wind of each half-open sash. At the farther end two bonneted ladies were standing in the shadow, superintending the arrangement of the valances by a maid-servant and an old butler in brown. A second manservant was on his knees by the door, polishing at the floor with candle powder.

The two ladies curtsied grandly to Mr. Daunt's salute, and as Oughtryn despatched the woman to seek the girl in garden or stall, Daunt very gravely excused himself, and requesting to be summoned when the girl was found, traversed the Chamber to pay his duty to the visitors. There he stood in the window in his grey cloak, listening half quizzically to his chill observing acquaintance. As Daunt left them, Sir William stepped to the

back door of the hall, and slipping back the bolt, pulled it open against himself. As he did so, he saw the woman flutter past in the wind of the yard; while across, in the door of the cave, stood the lost Abelia, drooping shyly, with the house cat in her arms; also, a little within, appeared the maroon of Spafield's coat, and his bandaged wrist as he leant upon the hay-fork. Heans, in the instant he stood looking over, heard the man raise his voice at her in a pretence of hectoring, and the girl bend with the pretty crushed laugh familiar with her. A dismayed crying from the charwomen, as the wind caught them, brought Oughtryn up beside Heans, who for a moment neither heeded the pleadings of the former nor the master's shrill warning that "by opening in the litter he was crossing the scolds!"

Heans made to close the door, but hesitating, beckoned the old convict to look over, which he did, crying: "The woman was right. Bother my jacket, if the chit hasn't crept over to the horses!"

"Very strange," protested Sir William, "as if Miss Abelia had lost all fear of the fellow!"

"Yes, there is my darter at the stable door," said Oughtryn, heavily. He put up his hand and shut the door.

"Miss should avoid that rascal," Heans exclaimed.

"Nay, honour, a girl gets friendly with a man when she's doctored his hand," said the other. "They don't deal as we do. This morning early there they was slying with him at the kitchen door."

"Upon my soul," said Heans, in a low voice, "so innocent and so young!"

Oughtryn seemed to consider. "Let the chit be," said he, as one deciding, shrill and heavy.

In a few moments a door banged above the knocking of the windows, and presently the woman emerged from the passage, followed by Abelia. They had hardly come into the hall—Abelia now pallid, her lids low and troubled—when Daunt made his bow to the women, and came quickly out of the Chamber. While the Commandant was approaching, Oughtryn acquainted the women with what was in the wind about the sewing-room, and how it might be wanted in lieu of Sir William's chamber. Heans himself neither urged nor protested, standing with his hat poised in his much-cleaned glove, his eyes sharp upon this ashen day. Mr. Daunt had also, for an instant, other matters in view. Advancing, brisk and absent, he shook hands with Abelia, and then, with a swift apology for the abruptness of his demand, announced that the lady yonder (indicating the lady with the blue feather), Mrs. Scudamore, was most desirous a message should be delivered this afternoon at Miss Newry's, Tregaron, below the barracks, and he had promised that Miss Abelia would be kind enough to ride down with it. While speaking he gave a hostile look at Heans, as much as to say, "I

am aware you will make a favour of this, also;" but he looked so desirous and grimly kind, and in such momentary trouble with his ladies, that he carried his way on the wave of it, and while Oughtryn harshly consented, Abelia repeated after him the message she was to carry: "Mrs. Scudamore's compliments, and would Miss Newry be good enough to send immediately the short yellow fringes."

Daunt appeared so engrossed with small worries, that for a moment it seemed as if he would depart down the hall, altogether dropping Heans' affairs; he suddenly, however, returned to them, with the remark that his time was short, but if Abelia could be persuaded to resign the room for Friday night, the young actors might make shift with it, and Sir William Heans' privacy be undisturbed. It was his desire that no irritation should be aroused by the *réunion* of an evening. He was sure (in his stern way) she would aid her cavalier of many pleasant rides in anything helping to his tranquillity.

Abelia, after a fluttering silence, in which she never raised her quiet face, answered that it was only a little room, and they had intended to use it as a storing cupboard for father's sitting-room, which the ladies begged to have cleared. The woman, who stood holding by the banisters in the rear, put in at once, "that the ladies were not satisfied with the size of the small sitting-room." "That is so," said Daunt, glancing down the hall, "yet we want for his Excellency that room on the right of the door."

"My girl is happy his Excellency, the Governor, will make use of her room," said Oughtryn. "This is a raising of the house, which they tell me has seen Governors before—though I know, sir, you don't credit with that. Lord above, they say the old Captain walks in one of these rooms! though the fine ladies won't believe it, and as for me, I don't hold with such proceedings—unless perhaps when the man's an ill man, and then the dead they punish him."

"Ah, we'll be a long time waiting for the dead to punish," said Daunt, with a little hearty laugh. "If you can produce the old gentleman's wraith, Oughtryn, I am sure we all—Sir John included—will be delighted to entertain him as a guest." (He swung back towards the staircase.) "Come, Miss Abelia, show me the sewing-room! I believe Sir William Heans will be willing that you store the furniture in his bedroom, and if this is large enough, that may clear the matter."

* * * * *

They made through the stair door to one on the right, which the woman threw open, disclosing a small square closet, with some shelving, some plain chairs, and a table on which was a work-box. Daunt, walking in, sharply examined the place, and presently summoned Abelia, who felt her way to the table, the woman coming into the door behind her. The wind clapped

and rattled at the window, which looked through a pair of dusky curtains upon the back of an old watercask lashed by a hawthorn bush.

"Capital—capital! Oh, you must let us in here!" said Daunt, throwing open his cloak and fanning his harsh face with his hat. "We can move the table under the window, and you must let us have these shelves. Now, if I can persuade the young fellows to change the room, have I gained your sanction, young Miss Oughtryn?" One more intrusion, but the last, I promise you. Will you" (lowering his voice and staring round) "and Madame Inscrutable here—will you be quick enough to perceive something grave under my visit! It is to spare an intrusion upon another who, people are only too ready to say, is being made uncomfortable, nay, too likely silly or desperate, by a piece of harmless fun and pleasuring. I mean there shan't be one hint of this. Now help me to get on the right side of the book and secure that man his privacy."

He spoke low, but harsh, and not very good tempered. His air was persuasive and not disrespectful, yet beneath his harsh persuasiveness, there was ever something mocking and outwared, which either he could not hide, or did not trouble to, or specially used, while he was in the room, to cover a shyness he was in before the women. Abelia stood in the grey room, groping at his harsh and humid face as a bird hangs, poisoning, in a pale sky. It was the woman, however, wonderful and statuesque, with her fine pale hair—a blind look also in those fateful, care-nothing eyes—who spoke for her. "Yes," she said, in her slow voice, "they were glad it was not too little for the gentlemen. Oh, yes, it was provoking it was so small!"

And Abelia echoed in a murmur tremulous and precise: "They thought it vexatious for their gentleman that he should lose the breakfast-room."

"Ah, fickle lady, she remembers her riding-master!" said Daunt, harshly. (Was it from a carelessness of relief, or that old weakness of his, that he grew less polite?) "I knew you would not place us or your old *beau* in a danger; and yet" (speaking lower) "you must be cautious, you women, too; not too much sugar and petting or you will bring him into trouble. Petting was the cause of the last mistake, aye, indeed, and his first too. I speak frankly—warning—warning—something's wrong—not too much cooking and soft-sawder. As I said to Oughtryn: 'Cut a dash with him, but don't spoil him. That is all we police ask.'"

He stepped back, his grave face making for finality, and, pulling his handkerchief from his coat, moved over and measured with it the window-wall.

It may be said that Hate, as well as Love, breeds extraordinary cunning and dissimulation in the simplest of women. Abelia stood with that groping hand of hers steadying her timid face,

which reddened slowly to her smooth and peaceful forehead, product of retired, uneventful rooms. Still she tried to see Daunt through striving lids. The woman pushed herself from the door and came behind her, muttering over the unceasing struggling of the wind, "Nay, he's not so easy petted, sir. A hard one to please, but complains little to us. A proud spirit."

"I am aware of that," said Daunt, nodding his head and laughing. "I advise you to be cautious, Madame Inscrutable and Miss Abelia. I have not done with you yet, my dear young women."

"He is crotchety. Little worries provoke the old gentleman," went on the woman, in a calm, low voice, yet staring after his face as it moved about in a quiet inquiry. "We think there are them that perceives this."

"Ah, good woman, we are all provoked in that fashion," says he, smiling rather mockingly, as he examined a cupboard on the right. "I'll speak to Cadét Tipton about this place."

There was a moment's silence in this woman's sanctuary, and at that instant, the voice of Oughtryn rose somewhat shy and formal in the passage above the gossiping of the charwomen and the wind. "Speaking under correction," came the words, somewhat stilted as from one talking warily to kill a trying moment, "for he knew as little as any one on such a subject, he'd heard say if a ghost came out of a room, he was against rules—let alone a-runnin' up and down stairs as he chose of his own determination."

"We know our gentleman pretty confidential," persisted the woman, in her stern way. "We have bepitied him hearty. He never seems to get used to it."

"It might be very tragical with him. It is his delicacy of mind," said pale Abelia, fluttering up her shy and drooping face on Daunt's. "Oh yes, sir, at any time, something intrusive or degrading might put him out and make a desperate man of him!"

"Tut—you seem as jealous for the old fellow as he is for his pupil," said Daunt, gently; "we do as kindly as we are able. Meddle too much and you make a sad mess of it."

"I think, sir—I think those who do not like him perceive he is very proud and gentleman-like," said the girl, showing a sort of troubled spirit—her face darkening and turning aside.

The women put their arms on one another in a kind of quiet expectation, staring at the man's harsh face, awaiting something, and yet not awaiting, significant, persuadable, fateful, inscrutable, crediting, cynical—as we sometimes seem to see them. Mr. Daunt too was silent, his small hand on the table, toying with the green shells in the lid of the workbox.

Just then, above the dragging of furniture, and the plugging of the wind, a covert shrilling from Oughtryn broke in from the passage. "Speaking under correction, gentlemen," he was

saying, "their word of honour is used by them like the oaths of most people, and they tires of probity just as soon as they can rise no further on it."

A stern mocking smile broke over Daunt's face. "I see," he said, "your model father has glanced off the subject of ghosts to that of men. Curious beings, my little blind Abelia. Those modest eyes will be happier occupying themselves with shells and needles. But you will never let an old fellow advise—will you? Even we chamber mice must out and pretty it when we are young. Pooh! so shy and timid, you know all the world already!"

He raised his eyes, looking grey and steady into theirs.

He then put his hat on his greying hair, and began to do up his cape. "Gracious G—d," he laughed, "we mustn't forget Mrs. Scudamore's fringes! Kindly say it again, Miss Oughtryn."

Abelia repeated the message in a tremulous yet precise whisper, and Daunt, bowing to them both, went out into the passage.

Sir William leant, high and graceful, under the rise of the stair, looking, with his glass up in his thin, hot face, his tilted hat, and his air of weary scorn, very much as he had just been described to the two women. As Daunt came out, he turned sharply, and made a fine pretence of examining him, which the first sight of the other's face withered stiffly into the baleful. It was the same with Oughtryn, who, as the Superintendent emerged, was gossiping in the stair door (steady and distant as you could wish), but as he stepped upon the slates, put his hand upon his mouth, becoming bland and puzzled. Daunt made himself pleasant enough (if on the hop to get away,) saying, "Your hand, Oughtryn—the place is small, but I think we shall squeeze into it." Oughtryn shifted his stick, and fumbled off his hat, shaking Daunt's fingers, blank, blind, and tremulous. "Why, Oughtryn," added he, "you, and your respected assignee, are superannuated, I think. Your women are so amiable and respectable, I feel ashamed of having cadged another room from them. I did not wish to alarm."

Daunt then turned to Heans. "I think, sir, you are very rarely placed. The two women talk of you almost with affection. There, sir," he said, his face gathering from a grave smile; "owing to certain misrepresentations which have been brought to my notice since our meeting in the stable, I took the trouble to see that all was done to put myself on the right of the book, and you undisturbed. I think all will be well now. But by what God you worship, sir" (speaking quick and quietly), "let me beg of you to grasp plainly that this civility of mine is no soft-sawder!" He bowed to Heans, looking the veteran he was, lined, resigned, and tolerant to a mark; then turned and traversed the passage past the kitchen, and so to his right to the yard door. The women saw him, from the window of the

small room, almost blown into the cave ; so he did not even forget his promise to speak to the billet.

Sir William experienced inexpressible relief when the door banged, and started without a word in Daunt's footsteps. He turned into the breakfast-room still trembling with anxiety, not much lessened by a glum remark of Oughtryn's : " Fine days these, honour—but I like them worse than I did." In the breakfast-room, he went straightway to the fire, but had not stood there more than seven seconds, before dropping his stick. He tilted the marble effigy on the left of the clock, and extracting Carnt's old pass, examined it, tore it into pieces, and dropped them on the live wood. The black pellets he ground into the ashes, and covered with fresh logs. Afterwards he approached the other effigy, but did not touch it. He stood there, with his neat glove on the mantel, staring fixedly upon the serene breast of the Peace, and twice searchingly about the room. He seemed in doubt whether to freshly hide the pad, and where. At this moment, in his perplexity, it occurred to him to examine the articles which Mrs. Quaid had sent him, and turning to the table, he pulled the little bundle from his coat-tails. Among five or six passes bearing Oughtryn's signature, the handkerchiefs, a pocket-mirror (which he was certain he had never seen before), and a glass-string, was a soiled letter, addressed to him in a handwriting once more familiar, that of Captain Hyde-Shaxton. The seal had been broken, and the inside was only slightly less soiled than the out. It was a year and more since he had received a communication from Captain Shaxton. There were but two outside pockets to the pelisse, and these were large, and hung low to the hand. He knew, of course, this letter had not lain in them more than a few minutes.

He was about to read it, when the door resounding with a knock, the woman's voice rose above the worn lowing of the wind, begging permission to set the table. This he gave, pocketing the articles and moving with them and the note to the east of the windows. She entered with her grim face behind a tray bearing many remarkable and homely objects. While she went in her proud, slow way about the table—unchangeable for wind, riot, the World's no, or Hell's yes—he read this grim request :—

WORTHY SIR,

I am in a bit of a pickle. The old lady told you how I called the night after you and I met, and had a look at the pad. Well, I took a funny way of my own to let the town know I'd seen it, but some one (the police saw her early) floated the counter that the old woman denied it ; and, last night, at Magruder's, old Chedsey informed me several, to put a stop to it, had been to see, and when questioned, she said you had it, putting a doubt on the whole thing (you understand) and giving

me the lie. When I went down this morning, upon my word, I found she actually had sent it to you! When I learned this (you see I and my wife are in a bad position if it is lost, many being furious at my joking way with Daunt now they hear it isn't to be found, and at second introduction of you), when she saw what a hurry I was in, being *en suite* at eleven, the old cadge said she was to fetch away a coat in exchange for it, and would I make it good to her to pass a letter back to you as being found in the pocket; so now I warn you put it in a safe place—a place there's no doubt about till I can run up to-night and get it. I didn't ask the woman why you took it.—It is not difficult for a man learning life as fast as me, to make a guess why you took it into your possession. But I go one worse now. I ask, "Is it safe with you?" There's a hellish insinuation! Captain Shaxton do be serious! Ah, I'm a very comical man when I start—a comical man! But don't you interfere, friend, to prevent that.

Till I see you, with respect,

Dear Sir,

Your most obliged,

PAUL HYDE-SHAXTON.

CHAPTER XV

HEANS SEARCHED

WE know how troubled Sir William was about the pad for the few hours till Shaxton could relieve him of it, by the story of what he did with it for that time. During the afternoon's ride, dear reader, where would you think the embroidered, sparkling thing reposed? Not on the mantelpiece among the ornaments, or in Heans' little bedroom, nor even, by strange good fortune or prescience, upon Heans' own vigilant person; but in the saddle-pocket of his silent, stooping, blue-goggled companion, Abelia Oughtryn. What led him to take this strange precaution? Many things. A serious clash with Spafield had driven him a little wider from his balance. Again Daunt's many hints at his restlessness seem to have puzzled him. Was Daunt feeling in the dark, relying solely on his experience of captive-men, and his own self, as he had a skilful way? Was he running on his anger in the stable? His carelessness to opinion? Surely. Where could even he have got a hint of the truth? O'Crone had, alone, been too skilful to attract the most astute upon his staggering retreat. He thought of the fellow, Islip, of the Cascades tavern: a man with a covert, if pleasing manner, whom he had sometimes supposed in police-pay. Had Islip reported some of his injudicious railings, his meeting with Carnt, or Carnt's with O'Crone, or even overheard that Monday's conversation. Well, God comfort them!

There was all too much fear and risk with such a man! He might be more, not less, subtle than they feared. Finally, in case a hint might have been passed in to Daunt by Islip, and he were stopped, questioned, and as had been done a half a dozen times ordered to produce the contents of his wallet, he had given it, as they rode up the lane, to Abelia, to put in her saddle-pocket. Coincidence, we repeat, is a strange thing! When the very thing he feared happened, and Heans was stopped not only at the South Boundary, but also at Barrack Square, and ordered to dismount and produce in the watch-house what he had upon him, Fate's *riposte* was almost too much for him, and he was given a chair by one of the constables.

He soon found he was out upon a wild day, though for other reason than he had feared. When he demanded why the indignity was put upon them, he was told, with a sort of rollicking sym-

pathy, that the order was "owing to the absconding of Jewell, and a general wave of grumbling." There were other assignees under search, and to hide his relief that there was so good a reason he enquired if Jewell had been taken, and was informed "no, but the dogs had tracked him to the 'station' at Brown's River." "Ah, Jewell," he thought, secretly ironic, as he readjusted his coat, "Jewell, poor fellow, has taken the wrong turning"; for Brown's River was south, and West Head north.

But when he got out of the town, after the ordeal of the two searches, he became entirely unnerved, and with his eyes searching the geraniums of Pitt's Villa, perched upon its walls under the wood, he wondered if he could not carry up this ghastly treasure, and relieve his trembling hands, and those of the incompetent, shrinking, uncomplaining girl.

But we must first relate what had happened to Heans in the stable. He had inquired from the woman, and learned that Miss Abelia would be ready to ride at a quarter after three. When he had taken his meal, he took the old hat out of the beaufet, and again examined the writing. He desired, it seems, to certify himself on certain facts in the narrative, to again ask himself what sort of man was that with whom he had to deal. It was disquieting to know that he had been mixed up in the blacker game. What would he be at now with his little tricks and his grimaces? Apparently he, Heans, must be somehow in his light—though there was no proof of that, for he had known this type of cunning, gabbling fellow to show his fangs at sight of men of his like. We all know the strange shock of being brought face to face with hate with no motive. And this was a black, aged man.

Not very satisfied with his cogitations, he donned cap and jacket, and taking the chapeau thrust it carefully between the wall and lower and hollow part of the Roman figure. He heard Spafield's flute in the kitchen as he threaded the passage—stopped, and detected beside it the minor of Abelia's voice and that of the woman. As he crossed the windy yard—the breeze was yet brisk—he buttoned on a pair of Abelia's cotton gloves. His thoughts were on Surridge's death as he entered the stable. When over in the early morning, he had gone to the top of the cave, and peeped up the large opening in the last stall; but beyond the entrance, it was quite dark, and he could only feel with his hand that it was remarkably smooth, and narrowed immediately. As we are aware, Spafield had been filling that stall with straw, and as Heans entered again, he noted that the stack was now piled double the partition-height against the east wall, hiding the entrance to the crack. It now struck him, looking along the crack as it ran upwards, that the feat of the wounded man was more credible, the slope being less abrupt than he had supposed. He had been standing within the door but twenty seconds when he heard a noise just behind him, and turning, found that Spafield had followed after him, and was leaning, looking quietly at him, against

the jagged stones of the door. He himself had been there such a few seconds, his ears yet tingling with the flurry of the yard, that the man must have fairly run from the kitchen as he crossed the windows. After the first instant of surprise, Heans might have ignored the man's action, and the bold, dark, intent manner of looking upon him, as a piece of shabby intrusion, but for the body yonder in the crack, and what had happened across the yard in the chamber. As it was, in his nervousness and dislike of the high Tartar face and cushion chin, the cold old look, the long cheek with its tallow yellow and wine red, the puffy strength of limb creasing the loose trousers and straining the arms of the tunic, he gripped his cane to his chest, and flashing round, asked the man, point-blank, eye to eye, "whether he had orders to dog him about?"

Spafield did not move, but with bitter white eyes on Heans' cane, asked the gentleman if, looking at it sly, he would take him for military man or constable? "Mind what you say," added he, with an impudent imitation of police-jargon.

"If you haven't," said Sir William Heans; "if you have no reason to dog the stable at all hours, or me, you can leave it to me for these few minutes while I am at my work."

"Bless you, sir, for that," said the man, with a cold sort of laugh, yet leaning leisurely, and eyeing Heans' person and limbs—never his face, "my body, I've orders, have I—well, not from you!" Here he settled his shoulders against the wall, as with a sort of dark pretence of preparation for a long and confidential talk.

Heans, forcedly recollecting his great chance, and the history of that port-hole in the wall near his eyes, turned away, endeavouring to thrust the fellow from his mind as one half-insane with bad health, bereavement, or remorse, who was diseasedly bent, while he had his accursed privilege, on persecuting his antipathy—the most gentlemanlike man about. "I give you my word," he says, in relating the incident, "it was my policy, as it was my wish, to cut and run; for this was not the week to let myself be pushed into a disturbance!"

Sir William, like many another, was not successful in his policy of discretion. He had gone off not very steady to the harness-cave, had returned with his brushes past the soldier, and had begun to groom Abelia's horse: a work which it was his habit to complete with some care. He was well at work at the grey, and had even broke in to a very thin whistling, when the soldier walked into the stall. His arms were folded, and his bold eyes were at once leisurely and vicious, lazy and angry. It is not said of men of Sir William's age that they are cruelly frightened, yet as he brushed the quiet horse, Heans trembled for his precious hope, pressed so covert by this man. Was he seeking a collision? He seemed to know by intuition that he had been avoided. As he leant his back against the stones of the partition, he spat, and

Heans, for a flash, stopped working, and looked up in his face from beside the belly of the horse. Threatening as he looked, he hid a trembling, for, as we have said before, he saw by his eyes and mouth this was a black, aged man.

"So," he said, "you are still interested to remain in the stable?"

"My faith, yes!" he answered. "You can't help yourself. I'm a quarter, I am. I'm making a home of it. 'Ang you, this nag's for pretty kit—our blind kit!"

Sir William made no answer, except a growing pallor.

"I believe you don't understand what I means," said the man. "I'm jealous for the girl. Come, now, you let me do the horse for her."

Heans rose beside the grey horse.

At this instant an ordinary natural sound came to his aid. He had never noticed it before, but on the sudden he heard the wind groan in the crack above their heads, with a curious human wuther, as it does in many a seaside chimney.

"A strange place to make a home of, I think—my man?" said poor Heans.

"Ah, my noble, and a curious place for two!" said he. "I am" (with an indescribable and veteran threat)—"I am turning your face away from our blind shy."

Sir William took no notice of this remark.

"And you are sleeping in the harness-room, there, I see? I noticed your bed by the wall?"

"No."

"Ah, my man! What is this? I understood them to say you are camping—sleeping—in the stable?"

"If you want to know—no. I've changed my mind. I prefers the 'ouse for sleeping, as it turns out."

"What is there amiss with the stable, sir?"

"What! has he been telling you about the dook¹ last night?"

"I heard you last night from this cave, my man. So you prefer the house, dark women and all? Why have you changed your mind?"

Here Spafield moved his shoulders a little against the stale wall. Sir William bent beside the grey.

"By my body, I can't think what you want!" said the fellow, looking down upon him with those cold, sharp eyes. Sir William noticed that the tops of his high cheek-bones and the bridge of his angular nose were grey as earth. "You're asking me why I changes my mind? Perhaps to oblige you, my lord. Perhaps, to oblige myself. Why do you want to know . . . why I changes my mind about sleeping in that little cave?"

"It struck me as strange," murmured Sir William Heans. And he began to brush the stomach of the horse.

"Psha!" jabbered Spafield, after a silent look at him, "I'm

¹ Spirit.

not partial to a rough bed! I'm the janleman for the ladies' chamber. I don't like these here ghostly images—his Majesty King George's ghostly image—no, nor them horses pulling at night at their chains, a-putting a man in mind of them old bailiffs. There you have it, steel and 'andle. You won't find me a changeable man. You won't guess me out. No man's ever choused me off his footsteps. I've a preference for sleeping grand, and I've another reason. Now, why do you ask me why I changes my mind?"

The man lowered his face, tugging with his teeth at the tag of the dirty bandage on his wrist. While doing so, as though by some irresistible attraction, he curiously cast up his wide, bold eyes over the wall.

Heans was stooping with his eyeglass directed up beside the body of the horse.

"It has struck me as strange," he said, with a marked and ceremonious distinctness, "that you should alter your mind—a determined man like you!"

The man's eyes glazed wickedly as he stood against the partition, turning dry and dark. He shook his head, tugging savagely at his wrist and muttering contemptuously like the veteran he was. "Ah," he agreed, in a short, hoarse voice, "strange! Struck you as strange! You're one to ask a private question—you are!" (Here he tugged the tag out of his teeth, releasing his threatening face as with a spring.) "And I'm to inform you private why I moves here and dogs there. Break your heart, no lip-service! Open talk! Life's a game, isn't it? Well, it's to be an open game this once atween us. No funny finger work. Nobody watching you."

"Nor you," said Heans as grimly as himself.

"Ah" (the man nodded palely), "you ask me private, and I'll tell you why another time—I will. The whole dying-gasp truth!" With that he settled his shako on his head, spat, turned leisurely as if to move out, stopped, said "No offence, I hope," and moved very slowly out of the stall. You may—if you are Colonial born—have seen a snake move in this way round the one door of a room. Sir William could hardly believe that he had gone. For a while he paused before the black planks of the middle door—very close—as if examining the make. Then he moved down to the open entrance, and Sir William heard him singing under the wind:—

Morruda, yerrabá.

At last he moved out, and Heans, going to the door behind him, saw him sway across the yard, and go round the corner of the house.

* * * * *

So when Sir William got out in the wind of the road, the

thought of Shaxton's warning, and his unpleasant experience in the stable, so added to his uneasiness, that he became reluctant to return with the pad through the town. Though he hardly fancied they would meddle with Miss Oughtryn or her horse, still—on a pretence of not knowing her—she could be asked to produce what she carried, and he was the more troubled at the possibility, since she had shown—or he fancied so—some reluctance to take the pad from his hand. It seems that both Oughtryn and his daughter were markedly cautious in their relations with him where these touched upon his connection with the System (as indeed with them was he), the laws, risks, and bounds of master and pass-holder being strictly taken for granted and never outraged. Indeed, had they shown weakness in this matter, Sir William's ceremonious exactitude would alone have put a check upon them. But Oughtryn and Oughtryn's household had always been shy and wary—even ungenerous—with any situation threatening collision with authority, or Heans' status. So even when Heans held the embroidered pocket, without cover, towards her saddle (they were just turning into Davey Street), telling her that it had reached his ears the very happiness of a lady, who had once shown him kindness, depended on whether he was able to keep the little article till he could pass it into her husband's hands, and speaking of the fear he had of its being lost or taken out of his possession, and how he kept it on his person, anxious lest they should have him in again at Boundary and he should lose it like his private letters—even when he spoke of his anxiety, and asked her to take it, she only goggled at it puzzledly, and then at himself, fumbling her reins "as if they were knitting" (as Heans often told her), and presently must jig away, in a serene muddle, with flapping hat and kindly horse. When, however, she drew again beside him, this time running clumsily into him (a species of accident he thoroughly objected to), she begged him, in a tremulous and troubled voice, "if he thought it would be safe there, if he would please to place it in the pocket of her saddle, as she could not spare the fingers?" Whereat Heans, thanking her, yet seeing she seemed dismayed, bade her turn away her head, and she would not know if he had hid it there or no.

When they were stopped outside the Barracks, and she sat in the road near the black-bloused constable who held Heans' horse—with her calm eyes blinking through her goggles and her clumsy habit fluttering in not-pretty folds, she made a curious, uncompromising figure. Perhaps she was not yet sure what she held. Her very discomfortable yet serene appearance seemed to isolate her from her companion's difficulty, and speak for him as some one improperly disturbed. When Heans came out, staring about him after the old fine manner, but ah so flushed and baleful! she answered his hoarse enquiry whether "she had been much disturbed," with the tremulous answer that "she was not so much discomposed because of the other occasions." At which

the young constable had hitched up her ever-dangling curb, and patted the grey. But when (having left the message down near the water and continued on out of the town) they were pulled up with a summary jocularity at Boundary, and because of the press of pass-men, Abelia was left by the roadside blinking blindly about, with Heans' rein in her unreliable hand—if she retained it, despite the sentry's private prognostication that she would "drop it for a paper dollar," she lost her delicate colour, and grew marble under her goggles and tight shiny hair, very dismayed in her eternal quietude, so much so that a stout gentleman, passing in a gig, who knew of old whose riding companion she was, took her face for a sign that Heans had been "caught again with compromising stuff"—to which his lady in the yellow overbonnet replied that she did seem very dejected. It may be she was not very clever for a woman, or the double cause of her dejection was too heavy to be concealed. When Sir William trembled finely out, with his glass stuck in his port-wine face, and "supposed that after this, by Heaven, she would prefer to return to her home," she whispered distinctly, "not if he wished to take a ride beyond." Their relief when they got out upon the sea road may be imagined.

Heans, however, did not continue battling with the wind, but turned inland, and rode a mile or so under the town, till he neared and joined the road which he had known so well, and saw closer than he had seen for many a month, the mounds and rises which stepped upwards to Pitt's Villa. And there it was, standing on its brown walls in its woods; those above it rocketing beyond sight into the mountain mist, that into which their road turned concealing, secret as of old, the precipitious approach—scene of that broken rendezvous with Stiff. I believe Sir William muttered and grew greyer as he went beside Miss Abelia Oughtryn. Did he blush also as he thought there was no longer repute nor peace in it? Did he remember the shy disapproval, the psychological doubts, of poor dilatory Stiff, who in four more days was to take him to freedom? The moment was fraught with excitement and pain. Nay—did he think of Daunt, and how they quarrelled in better days in the room above? Heans did not draw rein till they turned into the bottom of the wood, where, looking up, they could see the wall, and the geraniums trembling in the gusts.

He stiffly and slowly dismounted. Abelia dully watched him through her goggles. She must have known that the house above was that one he had once frequented. She must have known too—if she knew no more—that he had received no communication from those who dwelt there since his escape. She may even have heard that the lady chatelaine was his cousin, and if so, may have had her conjecture how such a cause could have severed so abruptly an acquaintance so intimate. Did she know how beautiful and kind was the lady—the lady who had

fainted in the passage—how much more puzzling it must have been! Indeed, what might she not have gathered, from the happenings at the Cottage two nights ago—and of to-day—she, who, according to Mr. Daunt, had her own precocious mood of playfulness and . . . knew all the world already!

Heans' experience at the dwelling of O'Crone, the day before, had so hurt his pride (as having in it a hint of intentional punishment towards himself, as well as an end joyful to all), indeed had so seared his mind, that he approached with a chill nervousness, not usual even in the days of his assignment, not only the house in the terrace, but Pitt's Villa also. At the first-named, he had waited some distance beyond the gate, somewhat conspicuous with that faded, flowing saddle-cloth, old spencer, decent hat, and baleful glass; here, after Shaxton's letter, and a reason as good, he was of course more unwilling to be found. He knew who was beyond the trees. Knew longing—yes. He saw her face, how she looked, how spoke, how shook her fair, good head. He saw her sink upon the floor—so pale—in Oughtryn's cottage. Had she heard then what had been said of her by Mr. Daunt? For whom—or by whom—was she stricken down? He turned away his sad mind. He was going from this place. Yes. Out of it—of this. No more avoiding. No more tutoring. No more escorting. Yet he wished, in her danger, in his shamed affright, to get the pad into those hands, and know them folded close against that heart.

He strode musing along the narrow track. At any moment a fly might go up or come down, and they become food for the curious. Torn between longing and disquiet, he approached Abelia, who sat patient upon her grey horse, her goggles also on the road. He had thought it proper to call her attention more than once to the incongruity of those calm airs upon a horse. "As if she were playing her 'farewell to the piano,'" he would say, "and the horse too." But now she looked fatigued under her straw hat. Advancing, he asked if he might remove the article he had placed in her saddle, and starting, she answered, "Yes, sir, if he considered it quite discreet." He continued with hoarse gratitude for her understanding. "He gave her his word, it was because he was not easy in the thought of returning with it through the town—even in the saddle! He thought he would get it now into Mrs. Shaxton's hands. It would be over then. And a bad weight done with. . . . The lady lived at the top of the road, where she could see the red blossoms. A good woman—a kind woman. 'Pon his soul! he considered it would be best to be done with it."

He took the folded pad out of the pocket, and unfolded it. Bright little criminal of many adventures—tragedies—pretences! It had thrown its refreshment into more than handkerchiefs. Conniver at two breaks for freedom. Small minister of rescue—

nay, perchance, and ruin ! There it lay in its red, gold, and black—pretty thing—unharméd but for Shaxton's stab !

"Do you think they would search my saddle?" asked serene Abelia.

"No," said Heane, "they would not touch you, unless they mistook your identity."

"Why does the Superintendent speak of you as so unsettled, Sir William?"

"They have got 'prison unrest' on the brain, I think," said he.

"But you are not restless, are you, sir?"

"Tut—tut, no. Perhaps it is because Mr. Daunt has said I am so, and having said so, would provoke me if he could, into some indiscretion. Now, miss, what other reason could there be for suspecting your quiet old tutor?"

"Why, I don't know that there is really any other reason," she said, sitting low and speaking sad. "I hope you keep good company, Sir William—I hope you do, Sir William."

"What do you mean, miss?" asked he, rather sharply. "I see my few friends; sad fellows like myself. Are you afraid they will grab me through Mr. Corbet or Mr. Carnt? Besides" (he looked up dark and grave), "you keep queer company these days yourself, my dear."

She reddened, looking dully scared. Ignoring the reference to her dallying with the soldier, she asked (nay rather beseeched): "You would think Mr. Daunt was too sprightly a kind of gentleman to be a very dangerous gentleman?"

Sir William looked from her face to the article in his hand. "Do you mean that you are aware it is he who has spoke against this lady—Mrs. Shaxton?"

"No, I don't know that," she said; "I don't want to know that." (And the drooping figure threw up its grotesque, never-used whip.) "It is for you, sir—poor man," she said.

"Me, indeed?" cried Sir William, rather weary. "I am well enough, my dear. Very handsome of you, ma'am, I must say. But what bothers you? See—are you really beginning to be afraid of your Mr. Daunt?"

"Mr. Daunt socially ruined in Hobart," he was thinking.

"I am very disturbed about him," she said, strangely.

"Disturbed? Why, my dear," says he, huskily pooh-poohing it, "you will persuade an old fogey you care what becomes of him——!"

"La, how do you mean, please sir!" she almost cried out, "'what becomes of you?' Isn't that a tragical way of speaking?"

"Oh," says he, put aback, "just my careless way of putting it, Abelia."

And he gave her a sour little stare as she sat uncomfortable upon her horse. "They're always watching me, and be hanged

to them! Learn to ride, young lady, and you will please me. And give a thought, child, give a thought to whom you talk with. I don't like the soldier-fellow, my dear. I have private information about him. I know him to have been a bad fellow—stay! —I think him still a vile, bad fellow. My dear young friend, keep away from that man. He spoke of you almost familiar this morning . . . but, come, I know you do—I know you do! Who so sensible as you when you like! Don't mind my talk!”

Her straw hat had fallen till it concealed her goggles.

“You do not say anything to reassure me?” he said, a little sharp, but kind yet.

“Yes, I do,” she said, dropping to the vague and tremulous. “But I am very discreet. Oh yes, Sir William. We are so very careful—so very careful of making trouble with people—people put over us.”

“Ah,” said Heans, “and if I have private evidence the man was once as bad—bad as him you heard over the wall? What then?”

“But those who sent him there—they can't be thinking him so very wicked—please, Sir William Heans. He seems sick and bitter-like. Perhaps he's a reformed gentleman.”

“Why! my child, he is a bad man!”

“Oh please, sir, please—it would not be wise or kind to act with him unfriendly!”

Heans stared at her calm face.

“I declare before Heaven,” said he, very pallid, “you mistake me!” (And he put the pad in his coat-tails, and turned to his horse.) “Don't you be too sure, ma'am, there's a necessity, when a man is a villainous fellow!”

He now mounted and somewhat deliberately tautened his mustard-coloured gloves. The wind missed them in the grey-black road, splashing over the bushy pinnacles of the wood, and huddling and rattling in the opening. “Now,” Sir William said, “with your leave, I will take no further risk. I am nervous of Mr. Daunt, and so are you, my dear. He is more interested in the fate of the little article in my pocket than in all the rest of his affairs. What might a man like that not do! I tell you, I thought he would have taken it from me this morning in my room—so painful was my anxiety. This little pad put in her hands will make him a perfidious fellow—a betrayer of friendship—a calumniator before Hobarton—about this lady, and about poor Heans, your faithful old servant. Won't you, for my friend's sake, and for your old servant, come up now, and put it in her hands?”

“Me, sir?” said Abelia, rather pitifully; “you want me to do it?”

“Yes, my dear.” (And he looked down, struggling his glass in, as hardly knowing what he did) “I will never ask you to do so much for me again. I will dismount you at the gate, my

dear—I have a private reluctance to handing her something which if it brings her relief, must remind her of much suffering come to her through me. Go in and ask for Mrs. Hyde-Shaxton. You will give it into her hands only, and say it is ‘a farewell gift from a sincere friend.’ Do I make myself heard over the wind? ‘A sincere friend.’”

(Yes, Abelia heard him. She was watching him closely with dismayed, soft, striving goggles, as if she would have warned him that he was again speaking strangely tragical and final. Farewell! The word caught in her own slender throat. And why, if all would be right now, did he bid the lady “farewell” as if he would never see her again in the wide world? And why was she—she who lived beside—never to do more than this action for him? A sad way to speak! A strange, vexatious way! Yes, she heard him over the wind, and crushedly nodded her calm, pale face.)

“Quick, let us get it done!” he said; and while he spoke he glanced behind him, as with a recollection of another meeting on that road. “Not my name,” he said, “if you can withhold it, my dear. And return quick, and I will be waiting a little down the hill. It is but a few yards from the gate. I remember the place. Ah, it will save us much pain—save us much pain!” Indeed, he was not entirely himself, and seemed to try and shut his lips as he shook his reins and moved upwards.

Abelia followed on her grey horse. In his tragic eagerness he left her somewhat behind; and by the wall at the top he waited for her, his hand on his hat, and coat-tails fluttering. His bleared face was kind, and smiled as he put that flapping yellow thing into her slow hand. When he had lifted her to the ground and she had groped her way into the garden, holding her habit loosely, her hat low upon her white, quiet face he turned back, and struggled down beside the wall into the shelter of white stems and silver bushes. As he passed, he picked a double blossom from the shivering crane’s-bills, saw it but absently, and moved on crushing it to atoms in his fingers. His track was starred with little drops of red. The uneasy beasts delayed him, pulling at the tussocks, or urging forward against his shoulders. Now he stopped. Behind him was the retaining wall, below him the fall of the steep road.

* * * *

When Abelia reached the door and rang, Matilda came out and spoke to her very kindly. She examined the pad, saw the monogram upon it, and seemed at once to gather what it was that was being handed to her by the dextral being in the untidy habit and goggles. She asked the girl if she had ridden up alone, but the girl trembled out, “no, there was some one with the horses.”

Matilda then said strangely: “Won’t you take off your glasses,

and allow me to see what you are like? You have been a companion to Sir William Heans upon his rides for so long a while."

Abelia struggled off her glasses, and showed her restless eyes. Matilda stared and wept some tears. She presently expressed surprise that the article should have come into her hands direct from Sir William Heans, since Captain Shaxton had sent up in the morning to say he had warned Sir William he would call that night. Whereupon Abelia, with some silence and looking down, told her no one had seen Sir William but Mr. Daunt, and what had just taken place at the Barracks and Boundary, and how Sir William Heans had formerly lost private letters in that way. And Matilda abruptly asked, "But why should he carry it with him?" And the girl shook her quiet head, and then explained that he took it from his pocket just as they came up to Davey Street, and put it in the saddle. After which Matilda took her limp hand, whip and all, and for a long while could not stop a kind of silent crying.

Abelia stood quiet until she had recovered herself. Once she fluttered up upon her face with blind, placid eyes, and fluttered away. Matilda begged her to thank Sir William Heans. She had suffered much to-day, and for the last three days, for the sake—for the sake of this dreadful matter, and she could never thank him enough for the precaution he had taken—for taking it into safety, and so bringing, she was told, yet really would not believe it, another danger on himself. "Oh, it was not believable of any one." (We see this was the kind of friend Mr. Daunt had made himself—as many another: a being to whom he could be faithless in a weak moment, to whom he could be mean and wicked with provocation, and yet who would not readily leave him.) But she would run and write a few words, she added, if Miss Oughtryn would wait one moment; and Miss Oughtryn assenting tremulous-voiced, yet as precise as she could be under the strange circumstances, she ran away like a fair, uneasy wraith. And Abelia, as she stood blinking at the blowing flowers, once echoed to herself, "Not believable of any one!"

Matilda wrote to Sir William Heans much what she said to Abelia, adding: "Sir, I cannot believe there is any danger for you, or one in your position, if only you will be jealous for your private welfare, and the regulations. There are those who are too ready to say you are among those harbouring resentment against them; who watch for your falling, full of pessimism, and disbelief in your discretion. I have heard more than one speak of you in that way. Surely this is all you have to fear. If there is more, only God can watch. Oh, sir, the quiet path, and rigid care, just now, for your very life's sake! Miss Oughtryn tells me you wish me 'farewell.' Thank you, sir, and I wish it to you too."

Even when Matilda came out with the letter, she seemed not

very well able to speak. Yet in her ardent seriousness, she forced her unwilling lips to say, "in Captain Shaxton and herself Sir William Heans had no fair-weather friends, as he would find if ever he—ever he needed them." It was the old, skilled Matilda Shaxton who spoke those words. And Abelia took the letter, and bobbed a serene strange curtsy. At that Mrs. Shaxton came forward very touchingly, and put her hand for a moment on her arm as if she would stay her yet. But she did not seem able to think of what she would say.

Poor Abelia blinked very fast, and her calm head trembled. And suddenly Mrs. Shaxton said quite quietly: "Do not distress yourself, Miss Oughtryn. It will all come right—it must," and asked if Sir William was much changed? And presently the girl trembled out in a cautious way: the gentleman was a little wilder in his ways—"Oh, I don't know, ma'am!" but she knew he would be grateful for the despatch. Then out of her placid distress, she broke away, and tremblingly asked, "if she might pick Sir Williams Heans a few of those thin, white flowers as a keepsake?" And I suppose, as Matilda bent her head over the valerian, she must have remembered that wild morning she picked them for Death's sake.

So Abelia fumbled on her goggles, and bobbing another curtsy, wrestled out of the pretty blown garden, holding her hat and the flowers in a forlorn-hope clutch. Oh, at the gate, what a torn, grey sea! She shut the gate, and struggled wisp-like along the wall till she found her companion. There he stood, with his hat in hand, smoothing his neat forehead with a faded check handkerchief. His chin was somewhat sunk in his cravat, and his eyeglass swung upon his old spencer. How distinguished and handsome he looked, how elegantly the old plaid breeches gripped the well-painted boots. How well his drooping, French moustaches became his aged and saddened face.

He looked about, blanched, and stared as he saw the flowers Abelia carried. The girl's face behind the goggles seemed unvexed, but as white as her Vandyke collar. As she groped nearer, he seemed frightened at the stoniness of it. "Ah," he said, "you seem overtired, miss," and he regretted that he had brought her through so much. She did not seem inclined to speak, possibly because she would not trouble him with an answer; but she gave him the letter, and stood fluttering over the flowers, till, taking them from her, he fixed them in the pocket of her saddle. It was only when descending the hill that he asked for the flowers, took them, and threw them into the wood; then opened the letter, read it, and cast away the fragments. He experienced a curious notion at the bottom of the hill, where for a moment he pulled in alone. At the top, where the trees met the wall—he was certain of it—some one was standing in a maroon shawl.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PAD OR FAIRPLAY

It was indeed a day of discomfort, for Heans was again stopped not 300 yards inside Boundary by the armed constables in charge of a road-gang, being sharply questioned, though on representing, half-beside himself with indignation, that his ill-used lady and himself had been already twice molested, and himself searched, he was permitted to pass up into the town. The gusty place seemed full of alarms. Behind a company of stately pedestrians paced a couple of constables with carbines: and as they crossed northward by the oil-lamp, where poor Stiff had too openly snatched at his schooner, there was a grey party of sub-overseers tramping under their muskets. Again, at the street-foot a glow of red against the cemetery was, in Heans' opinion, nothing less than a sergeant's guard of the 51st Foot. Sir William was hard hit with the unlucky coincidence which had led Jewell to run for it, at that instant, and stir the vigilance of the police fair in the face of his own attempt. He felt at that moment cowed and frightened ("as if he had been quite a young fellow") at the thought of renewed encounters with the insane man, Spafield, and at his thoughts of Mr. Daunt. Now that all was over, it was weighing on his mind that he had diverted the pad into his possession, chillily fearing some outcome yet. He was overwhelmed, he says, by a sort of black fear that there was no fighting through malign coincidence and the meshes of espial and disaster the presence of these two men implied. No doubt, being somewhat overhung with the grey evening, he was confusing unlucky coincidence with human action. Only for an instant was he so broken in courage. Before they came under the cliff his spirits had risen somewhat and pushed further from him these tragic counsellors of fatigue. He made an effort to see things clearer, reminding himself of the retirement of the ruffian, and the tragedy in those gloomy rocks (there was a little ferny path up into their one ravine) past which the snorting beasts are ambling. He renewed his resolution to lose no time in acquaint-

ing Oughtryn with the man's singular behaviour, to show him the hat, the writing, and the black strings, as well giving an account of Conapanny's warning, and of the ruffian's gross and unpleasing reference to Abelia. Despite Oughtryn's almost sinister respect for matters touching the System—and for those with its borrowed or deputed power—he trusted he would be prevailed upon to report the ugly story, and immediately rid them of the man; failing that, that he would disclose his true opinion of the man's peculiar attitude towards himself.

It was then, suddenly remembering that he might never again lead Abelia towards her father's gate, he turned and called to her, she tailing, in her provoking habit, just in the rear of his beast. Under her Manilla hat, her face held a peaceful paleness, as though she cherished some taper of calm in some privacy of her mind. With her too-many reins and ridiculous whip, she clung, with some spirit, to a bit of valerian, broken with the swinging of her horse's head. Sir William drew in, and speaking with her, said, with a gracious softening of that baleful air, "Here we are, my dear; and an end to our day's ride. Are you cold, miss? Egad, there's an end of all things, a finishing, be it good or be it cruel. Mercy upon us, it has been a bothersome day!"

Pale Abelia seemed to reassure him, trembling out it had been "very agreeable," but that "her fingers were quite benumbed upon her bridle-reins."

"Ah," said he, alluding to her piano, and dropping out his glass with his pleasant old cackle, "presently you will warm them with your, 'St. Patrick's day in the morning.'"

He was pushing in the wind to the high gate, when from up the lane a shrill "holloa" stopped him. Some one in a blue shako and short military cloak ambled down upon them, waving a white glove. As he passed under the rocks, his voice laboured out, begging them to await his coming, and Heans (and possibly his companion) saw it was Captain Shaxton. Heans dismounted and awaited his approach. Shaxton advanced breezily, saluting the young woman, and vigorously shaking Heans' hand. "Gracious G—d!" he cried, "what an evil wind!" And he took off his shako there and then, and showed them the splash upon its blue felt side where he had twice lifted it from the road. Almost in the same breath he whispered a wounded query about his letter, and receiving, for his hunted stare, a steady affirmative, avoided or waited for no more, but running to the gate, swung up the manacle, and pushed a way for them into the yard.

This experienced reader of faces seemed satisfied that he was to have what he wanted, for he made himself very foolish, useful, blind, and clumsy, assisting poor Abelia to alight, with a half-present air, but many chuckling pleasantries, among them an amusing reference to a lady who when asked if she liked riding, said she loved it, "all but the walking, ho-ho-ho!" (than which anything less applicable to shrunken Abelia, with her pale face

always turned aside from the speaker, could hardly have been imagined), and himself stabling her grey, dwindling however in this process, and presently turning, and giving Heans to understand, when quickly he joined him in the stable-door, that, "upon his life, he believed the squealing wind was dropping!" Either the yard was so much more protected, or it was certainly growing calmer. The gusts no longer lashed the sky with the gum-top, nor tried the wall bushes. The sky seemed lighter and yellower behind the pediments of the Hospital.

Heans, with his hand to his mouth, called the information to him that the article mentioned in his note was already in Mrs. Shaxton's hand; and who was the conveyor; and how they'd had trouble with the police; and after voluble thanks (rather white and thunderstruck), and an interval of strange chuckling, Shaxton gave signals of unquiet, either of waiting on the other for a sign, or of wishing to be gone without resurrection. Sir William, however, persuaded him to take gin with him in his rooms, partly, it seems, "for a certain communication he wished to make," and partly for the little pleasure of his happier company in the moil of private difficulty in which he balanced. Spaffield, by the way, was nowhere to be seen. Abelia had gone in by the kitchen door. They immediately pushed their way across the yard.

The Chamber seemed full of company, as indeed from the rumours might have been the house. Some shawled ladies peeped through the glass at Captain Shaxton as he went. There sounded the 'clink' of refreshment; a sudden abnormal hammering; and the fall of wooden matter. A candle was lit by a resplendent curtain in the Chamber, and another sprang up deeper in the room.

It was a peculiar situation for both gentlemen, and they entered the small door and silently threaded the passage, both half-reluctant, both terribly drawn and grey. When Sir William ushered Captain Shaxton into his room, at first, in their abstraction, they saw no one, but afterwards they were made aware, by a slight movement, that Mr. Daunt was seated in a chair beyond the mantel.

Such was the presence of mind of that gentleman that for an instant he did not rise, but remained seated.

He was in full fig—sword, tailless red coat with immens ecollar, sash, grey trousers—and his grey overcoat, gloves, and cap with upturned peak were on the table. His well-groomed face, always acute, had, for the instant, lost the pessimistic suavity lately noted in it, and was just much sharper than is nice: sharper than it is quite seemly to seem, and perhaps to look at.

The position of his coat and hat seemed to indicate that he had been waiting in the room for some while. He seemed very displeased at the sight of Captain Shaxton. Yet even as the

door opened, he had not the look of one whose thoughts, as he sat alone, had been composed.

He hardly bowed to Sir William Heans, but addressed Captain Shaxton, watching his face with extreme closeness. Whatever his intentions, were he wicked or mere man of the world, naturally, in his ugly position, his first thought would be to discover what had become of the fabulous pad (if Shaxton had it), and this, having known him intimately, he could do best by observing the condition of Shaxton's spirits. Having found him sharp enough, he might next wish to know if he had come for it.

He let them both come in and, till the door was shut: "Upon my word, Captain Shaxton," said he, with some reproach in his sharp voice, "so this is where I find you, actually plotting against me in company with my prisoner, Sir William Heans! This is too bad! Frankly, if we were not men old enough to know better, it would be a laughable thing! The very man whose private rights, against my judgment, I am endeavouring to secure."

Shaxton, standing by the door, with the grey day on his puffy face, fiddled with the middle fastening of his cape, with a glum pondering, which, but for a deadliness in the eye, might have been mistaken for compunction. His sardonic lips trembled and twitched. He seemed to look almost with approval on Mr. Daunt, who, whatever else he saw, could not have missed the answer in that quieted visage to what he wished to know.

For some seconds he kept this look and mouth on Daunt. Before speaking, he let slip the little scimitar he wore, which he had been holding under his arm inside his cloak, to the floor, where its sheath "clicked" and tapped above the flow of the wind.

"Ah-ho-ho!" he muttered, still with his sheep's eyes on him, with that appearance of specious absence, "Sir William invited me in to drink something or other with him. On my honour, Daunt, we came in for that reason!"

He looked most unpleasant. And for some reason Daunt seems to have believed him. He came forward and rested his hand on the table beside his coat, his efficient, whiskered face slightly more suave and pallid.

"I know," he said, still watching the other's eyes, "who it is I speak to. I know the two gentlemen before me. I am aware just how friendly you two gentlemen are together. Pshaw, I know the use of lenity to men and women! Let us forgive our trespassers, but first, O Lord, deliver us from their certain enmity in the future! Ah, sirs, which of the three here will first cast a stone at the others! Let us curb a dangerous indignation. Fate has made an unbecoming thing."

Shaxton still fiddled with the fastening with his right hand, though with his left he threw back his cape over his left shoulder. "Ah, dear—dear," muttered he, always with that wavering, un-

pleasing stare, "I don't know, Daunt, that you're not justified. But what is this, sir, you wanted here? Do you wish that I, Shaxton, should cut and run, and leave you two men alone?"

Daunt at first answered nothing, merely turning to the fireless fender, with a loud laugh. Suddenly he said, shaking his head as if he would throw off a slight inquiet, "No, no, you need not go. I know your ingenious and agreeable way! I believe you are speaking too seriously." As he spoke he threw himself with some noise of clanking into the iron chair in which he had been sitting. The reader may remember this pleasing article of furniture.

The other gave a wheeze-like chuckle. "Why, I think I understand you," he said, lightly. "You're so highly civil and sensible about it. We used to be very well acquainted, Daunt; and you know you've only to ask Captain Shaxton to go and you'll get rid of him. Politeness breeds politeness, as the old woman said when she shook hands with the hangman. (Ho-ho—you heard me tell that before!) At the same time, I came in for a chat with Heans, and when I find you here, at such an awful moment for us both, feeling the tensity myself, and how we know each other so well (all the little intimacies of private acquaintance), how you hit it off with Matilda, the freedom—the unguardedness of our intercourse—our joking way—why—ho-ho—I—I thank my stars for your *sang-froid*, and the easiness of manner with which you smooth it all over."

"You spoil my confidence, Captain Shaxton, you do indeed," said the other, leaning forward with his hand upon his sharp, dark face. "Like our friends the gossiping ladies, with their too-red lips, your method has been of late (nay, has it not always inclined to it!) 'If only we can get him in the dirt, we will have something against him.' Can you two men get me there? There's the rub. Gracious G—d, is it possible to keep clean against so much ill-will! To tell you the honest truth, I am less deeply interested than you think; I am inclined to bestow the prize upon you." (It was a perhaps harmless foible of Daunt's that he never gave in; he invariably "bestowed the prize upon the other man.")

He rose slowly from his easy position in the chair—his face drawn and like a sheet of paper—and reached his fingers over the table towards his coat, as if to take it up, but instead rested his hand upon it, and raised his eyes upon Shaxton and then slowly over to Heans. "Do not plague me," he seemed to beg—and yet stared from those sharp eyes not quite saying it.

"I take you, Daunt," said Shaxton, his loose lips depressed and twitching like a bag. "I came in for a chat with Heans—here. Why—I'll stand aside for you to go—don't doubt me, Daunt—if your business with Heans can wait." He retreated back a sharp step or two as he was speaking, but, whether by accident or intention, brought up full upon the face of the door,

where he stood slouching a little, and staring over with those strange, plausible eyes.

Sir William, when he had first shut the door, had remained, somewhat shocked, beside Shaxton with his blanched stare where his was, and the handle yet unreleased. His face, at his entrance, showed a mixture of relief, amazement, and unquiet (there was fear in his pinched vexation) utterly different from Shaxton's humble staring. The trend of the talk, however, immediately recovered him, and he moved a pace from Captain Shaxton towards the window, and between the two, where he stood leaning upon his cane, his hat cocked, yet somewhat pathetic in his ceremonious yet horrified expression.

The room seemed older than its human occupants, with its fallen fire, tall furniture deep with many depths, and the wind flowing behind the stone sills. The Roman soldier, with his drum, his side-whiskers, and his blank, blind eyes, emptied of care or mischief, hope or rue, seemed closer to its permanencies than the three gentlemen in their mysterious human difficulty of approach. He might have stood for what Borrow called the "hearth spirit." A white cloth was on the table, which was set for Heans' evening meal with those curious appliances, the carved cutlery, the acrostic plates, the red-eyed decanter, the beautiful teacup, the toddy-glass with the picture of the Battle of Waterloo, the telescope castor, the hour-glass caddie, the elephant teapot—very pleasant and engaging. On the fire side of the table, as we have said, was Daunt's coat and hat, and beside his gloves, not quite visible to any one standing, lay a little silver article or fruit-knife, either shaped like a horse-shoe, or whose two small blades were open, giving that impression. So much Sir William saw.

"Do you wish to tell me, sir," Heans said, striding a step in front, with that curious half-balked air, "that you have waited on me again in behalf of my rooms?"

"Indeed, sir," said Daunt, breaking into a sort of sharp, kind grin (as "You're a clever man, aren't you!"), "who would think, from your manner to me, that I had waited upon you to inform you your private chambers would not be used! The ladies have been kept waiting, and tempers spoiled, while I sit here hoping to calm your distemper! A curious and gentlemanlike reception."

"You smile, Daunt," said Heans, with a terrible stare. "Are you playful, Daunt?"

Daunt's smile died from his efficient face, if not quite from his eyes.

"I protest," he said, "I am anything but joking in the company in which I find you. My obscure good will, the making a rather pet case of you, is not enough, you think? And yet you know me, sir. I have my bothersome antipathies like you. The mere wish to be right with myself brought me here, and sustains me yet. While you—reckless, presumptuous.

man!—and your worthy friend, with his ill-advised obstinacy, dare offer me this for my clemency!"

"No—no—it's the effect of generosity on you, bless you," said pallid Shaxton, softly watching him. "Come, now, I can't have you pitching into Heans. He's been—as you must know—interfered with during his pleasure-ride, and he's not up to it. I can't have you severe with what he says any more than with what I am saying to you. But you never seemed severe with P. S. And only once with the missus. Your natural indignation doesn't always overcome you. Be witty, be clever, Daunt, be stern with P. S."

Daunt drew up from the table slowly—doubtfully—with a displeased smile in his acute, wise eyes, as if some one (say a young fellow) had refused the safer thing. From the table, he removed his small, right hand, kimboing the tight red elbow. At the same time he placed his left on the mantel, turning his grizzled face across Shaxton to it. (Sir William, at that moment, noticed a singular thing: that the wind had ceased, and the tallowy sky was streaked with a wirrow of clouds, "like sheaves of hair upon the dead.")

Commandant Daunt played a little tune with those fingers beneath his eyes, but must have been too old and pallid—too bitter and careful—to make comfortable attack for Heans' companion, or ease of mind for troubled Sir William. Shaxton advanced a step from the door, and he looked up. He said at once, with a quick bow, as if to keep him back:—"As God is my witness, Shaxton, Fate has put three gentlemen in a singular position. Let me ask one question. The whole story is known to us here in this room. Must we dissimulate? You and I know what happened. We both overheard the words that passed between Mrs. Shaxton and Sir William, your friend here. We both heard Sir William's proposal concerning the schooner. (Do me the justice to remember I have never given that evidence publicity. Perhaps few would believe me if I did!) I ask you, did the terms used by her—the language in which she expressed her feelings—excuse me in my belief in the hackneyman's evidence?"

"Perhaps," cried Shaxton, in a shrouded voice, yet making a motion nearer to him. "But in the end you had your bit of public fun with her."

"As G—d is my witness, I never mentioned her name!"

"I know, Daunt," said Shaxton.

"I admit, sir, I had suspicions about the prisoner. And I informed you of them . . . with the result you remember."

"Yes" (with an effort), "you put me up to that. But you grew fatter, Daunt, and it began to filter through the wine-glass, didn't it? Yet she was a good soul."

"Pshaw, Shaxton," said the other, with a quiet outraged laugh, "if you're-going to outwit a man, you really must be more civil

with him! You are blinded by the fact Sir William Heans, here, has stood out for Mrs. Shaxton. Is it for you? to use your own joking way: is it for old P. S.? If he had not put forward his scent-pad, would you have continued your dislike? Have you entirely lost all feeling of heartache? Entirely? Come, come, you forgive so easily! I wish to G—d, I could forget or forgive it! I remember her gentle words as I stand here—those she used in the drawing-room at the Tier. They make me devilish angry. Yet you seem well enough together, Shaxton? The wound dealt you is healed by a few gentleman-like assurances. . . . Frankly, though, is the prisoner's feeling for 'P. S.' one of entire respect? The prisoner is a man of the world—a *mauvais sujet*; who has not heard of his gay cynicism! By Heaven, Shaxton, even I would forgive him a quiet smile of amusement!"

Captain Shaxton had dropped his head for a dark instant; then his depressed lips began again to twitch and to smile. Heans stared from the window quite old and sinister, his patched fingers trembling upon his cane. I suppose it would have been in a spirit of self-sacrifice that he forced from his mouth: "Aid me, Heaven; you heard her pitching into me, then?"

Shaxton whinnied out a nasty little laugh: "Fie, she was angelic with you, man!"

"Ah, well, it is you who laugh at me now," said Sir William, keeping his old face away.

"Which does it serve you to pretend?" said Shaxton, and he looked at the other—chuckling; and then stopped, and drew his face slowly back to Daunt.

"It would be more seemly if the man laughed at you all," the Commandant cried, "as, from my knowledge, I believe he does." (We believe Mr. Daunt believed that.)

Shaxton caught a heavy breath. His blue shako drooped (as we have said), but presently he raised it, drawing his ashen face, reduced, crestfallen, and twitching with humble joking back to Daunt. Thus staring, he slipped his cloak slowly off and threw it upon the Roman figure, where it caught and hung clumsily from the drum. Daunt lifted his strong, sharp face from his left hand.

"I believe you are playing with me, Daunt," said Shaxton; "upon my soul, I do! But you're not a good hand at it. I believe you were meant for an honest man. So was I. But hate plays the devil with our private honesty. That's the reason why I won't leave you. It's growing late, and the room's rather dark for us, but (unless it's imperative—I mean a matter of life, Daunt, and death) I won't leave you now. You know me for a jealous man. You knew that a year ago. Now again. Alas, it's true, but not quite in the sense you think! There's the jealous fellow who drops his jealousy a little when the object of

it is not successful. There's the jealous man who chooses that moment specially to strike. There's the jealous prank. All these may be your idea of it. Then there's the fellow who will 'persecute you to death,' as Queen Mary's friend put it when she married the other one" (he advanced two slow paces towards the kangaroo-rug, both hands fiddling with the stomach buttons of his coat, his eyes humble—half-jocular yet about that pallid hanging mouth): "old P. S.'s brand," he said; "you may have come across that too. Fie, think on the poor woman! Can't you blush! It is not too dark in this little room to see your eminent face. . . ."

He came yet a half-step upon the rug.

Steel-hard was Mr. Daunt; vigilant, regretful, deadly, a little sharp, a little careful, a little old. You would hardly have known him for other than a gentleman, in very difficult company, keeping himself on the civil side, except that upon the bottom of his face there was a smile-like contraction of the muscles, such as people have, they say, who have expired of thirst. It seemed involuntary. Perhaps he was trying to smile kindly. But that was not the significance of it as seen in conjunction with the vigilant eyes. It may be mentioned for what it is worth that Captain Shaxton said afterwards how, while he noticed that one of the Commandant's little hands on the mantelpiece to be white as snow, he saw that that upon his hip was almost as red as his jacket.

"As God is my witness, Shaxton," he said, harshly, "you are not well, or wise, or you would not speak so insanely. I made one little mistake about your lady, from the sadness—nay, the ugliness of my experience. I forgot her kind familiarity—her difference—from long absence: a matter at her door rather than mine." (He glanced at both gentlemen very careful.) "I misconnected her with the man, here, who tried to draw her astray, and for whose character and doings I have always had—as you know—and still harbour, a profound suspicion. Even he, himself, cannot say of that I am unjust." (He looked at Sir William Heans for a long time.) "Speak, sir, have I been unjust to you?"

Sir William, leaning with both hands on his stick, and blinking on the window, choked out: "Unjust! Damme, Daunt, I cannot say—I really cannot say!"

"No," cried Daunt; "only unjust to the other prisoners of the Crown, in making an exception of you, Sir William Heans."

"Come, Daunt," said Shaxton, "you near ruined my wife."

Sir William suddenly stepped forward and rapped Shaxton with his stick upon the arm. "You've had a bother with me, sir," he said. "Be fair to me." But Captain Shaxton never moved from the mat.

Daunt was answering him swiftly. "My motive, you know as well as I, was conventional—a mere company silliness. A secret

and bad motive may be found for every action of the noblest of men. Never take me for a true gentleman if this is not all my part in it!"

"G—d aid me," said Shaxton, still fiddling with his buttons with that unaltering stare, "G—d aid me, I'll make this man's face blush! Come, if I draw my dress sword on you, will you use your weapon?"

Daunt whipped his hand from the mantelpiece to his sword, but otherwise did not move. He looked very white, very malevolent, very full of knowledge. It is not a pleasant thing to see two such men in such a position. He answered Shaxton with the words: "You seem to me insane."

Shaxton pulled forward his little black sword, and got out the blade. He ran at Daunt. But even then Daunt did not draw his sword, but darted up, catching Shaxton's sword-wrist in both his hands, and forcing it—protesting quietly against the unseemliness—with some struggling—back upon his head. In another instant, Shaxton gave a sharp, exasperated cry, and the Commandant, suddenly releasing him, sprang back behind the table, and drew his blade from its sheath. When their swords suddenly clashed, Sir William noted a trickle of blood welling from Shaxton's right eyebrow, which that gentleman, while he held Daunt's blade with his own, kept whipping away with his left hand. The gentlemen were swaying to and fro with their swords pressing heavily, Shaxton endeavouring to free for a pass, Daunt's blade pushing heavily over his. When Shaxton got his sword clear, the blood was welling freely over his right eye and nose, and Daunt seemed with little difficulty to keep a succession of rapid cuts off his shoulders. The latter, in a breathless voice for him, cried out that he had hurt his eye with his ring, and bade him have a care, as the blood was blinding him. Captain Shaxton laughed a low laugh, and tore Daunt's jacket with a deadly blow near the elbow. Now Sir William sprang forward and pushed his cane beneath the weapons, urging them, under his breath, "there should be no more of it, with the house full of women!" But Shaxton, with a whimpering oath, thrust him off, so that he staggered to the window, and ran upon Daunt, at whom he slashed and thrust across the fire, his opponent engaging him with rapid work (indeed, the two men strove with a fair equality of attack and parry, Shaxton keeping the blood from his eyes with his left hand), till following upon a long and horrid locking of the handles—the two men's faces being within a few inches one of the other—Daunt, who was above, gave a sudden release, and with a wonderful, swift up-cut on the point, knocked the lighter weapon heavily back upon the other's face.

Shaxton went suddenly down in a sitting position. He seemed blinded and faint, or the blow with the sword-back, which already marked his face, had bewildered him. It must be remembered that Shaxton was fighting for his life—and Daunt too. He fell,

leaning on his arms, towards Heans, and the curve of his sword pointed over the carpet towards him; who, ducking almost as he collapsed, jerked the weapon out of his hands, though Daunt had put his foot within two feet of it. We cannot say what Daunt would have done with it. Sir William, fatigued with his day and distressed with its doubts and forebodings, had evidently some notion of attacking the Commandant if he could not otherwise defend Captain Shaxton, who, however, breathlessly demanded the return of the sword. In any case, after waiting an instant holding the slippery steel in his glove, and seeing the Commandant step back and presently bring his sword down on the table, he advanced, holding the hilt towards him, which the other, though at first he shook an ashen face, presently seized in his white hand.

Only for an instant, however. Next moment it rattled to the floor at Heans' feet. Daunt cried out, "no, he would not take Captain Shaxton's weapon on any account." "For my safety's sake," said he, "take it to the window, prisoner, and pitch it out."

Sir William, with a stare, took it up (Daunt holding to the mantelpiece, ashen and grave); drew the blade across his glove; and with a glance at Shaxton (who, even as he looked, demanded his weapon through clenched teeth) threw up the window and flung the weapon into the garden. There and then, as he heard it fall, he remembered all his private fears, and almost regretted, as he turned, that he had not answered an unfairer prompting and been a braver man.

Daunt put his sword away, and slowly lifted his coat and cap from the table. A spot of blood lay in the palm of his left hand. "There," he said, and a heavy gravity was on his face, "I might have kept your sword as evidence of this singular attack. It has gone, you see, where you may get it presently. Notice our friend's eagerness for law and order! No" (as Captain Shaxton began to heave himself, complaining, upon his feet), "remain where you are while I go to the door. I am a man of trained nerves, but I am not certain that I have not had two men to deal with—in this unfamiliar room—and my eyes to the light. You, and the man you have chosen to befriend you, may, if you choose, complete your campaign against me in the congenial atmosphere of spirit—or does Oughtryn provide Clos Vougeot?—you may keep the tune up undisturbed by fear of watch or overhearing. If you move, gentlemen, if you move, I give you my word, I will take my sabre to one of you!"

Captain Shaxton, who had got up upon one knee, as if by a spell remained in that position. Thus kneeling, propped by one hand upon his empty scabbard, he pulled a pocket-handkerchief from his breast, and wiped the blood from eyes and face. Subsequently, when Daunt walked across the room, he looked up at him, and as he passed, said, in a sheepish complaining: "What is this you've done with my forehead?" Daunt answered

with some concern, "You have me on the hip! I must have bruised you in a moment of excitement. Fortune, for once, was round the attacked." And stopping beside Shaxton, he brought round his right arm, on which hung his coat, showing him his small fingers, on one of which was a ring, the one stone of which might have been a diamond.

"Ha, well," groaned Shaxton, sitting back upon the carpet and feeling his heavy wounded face, "if she hasn't satisfied me, the bitch has not left me without a comfort."

We do not know whether Daunt blanched at this reference to his discredit (assuming Shaxton to have referred to Fortune), or whether it was his wound that chilled him, but he went to the door without a word. Shaxton looked after him, murmuring, with very small sharp eyes. When Daunt had opened the door, and was half through, he turned on Sir William Heans, who, with thin, grim, unquiet face, was watching him from the window. "I am not comfortable about your part in this, sir," he said, "after what I have done. I am never one, however, to carry my kindness too far—to the forgetting of mere duty." So speaking, he rested his stare upon him with a long, grave look, before he turned aside.

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We hesitate to conjecture what took place in the room after Daunt left it. It appears that Captain Shaxton could not be persuaded for a long while to rise from the floor, and that he felt his humiliation too keenly to be consoled immediately by reminder of what he had not lost. This is what Sir William tells us, but we gather the scene was even sadder and more tragic. Heans left him, with a second tumbler of gin beside him, and hurried out, round the back way to the garden, on a search for the weapon. The place was still and calm, the bushes black of bough and cut as from cardboard, the sea harsh upon the ear. A woman went down with a couple of band-boxes as Heans came up the path. He found the sword by its point, which lay wickedly over the cement, the glass-like blade very bright in the light. Without ado he took it across to his window and was about to throw it in, when a hand stopped his, and quickly released the hilt from his fingers. No word was spoken, and Heans did not return immediately, but, contrary to his custom, took the path once up and down, and picked a few of Miss Abelia's odd-looking flowers. When he did so, it was as he half expected: Captain Shaxton's cloak had gone from the Roman, and the meek bird was the only living occupant of the room.

We have yet to add that Sir William Heans, before tending his horses at 7.30, went carefully round his rooms, examining everything—even to the gauzes about the picture-frames—with minute scrutiny, if careful to disturb nothing with his fingers. We gather

that he found no single object out of its place, or even disturbed, till he came a second time to the Roman soldier, when, a return of his inward agitation in connection with the presence of the mansworn Spafeld leading him to feel behind the effigy, he was horrified to discover that Surridge's hat had gone.

Resting in the hollow back was a grey stone.

CHAPTER XVII

SIR WILLIAM BY HIS FIRE THAT NIGHT

And as to the speech about a villain, who ever saw one? Out of a novel or a play, I never saw a villain, and I don't know anybody who ever did.

—*Queen Titania, in "The Strange Adventures of a Phaeton."*

EXTRACT FROM AN ASSASSIN'S LETTER.

I'or, by the living God, if your honour will cause to be made there in England, a certain lingering poison, and send it hither by a trusty messenger to me, not letting him know what it is, but forge some other matter, and let me have commandment from your honour to whom I shall give it, and therewith you shall try me what I am

Old Letter, Sept. 3 1574—MSS. Flanders.

WHEN Sir William made this discovery, and when—having somewhat got over his dismay—he had again gone through the rooms, he took his cap and stepped into the passage. At the intersection of the two passages he called the woman. The light by the kitchen was lit, and the place quiet but for two dropping voices beyond the stair and its half-open door. The comfortable noise of cooking came from the kitchen, but in answer to his call an opposite door drew open, and the woman came very quickly out. She paused between the two doors, looking forward, her expressionless composure somewhat invaded. She did not shut the low-lit door behind. Sir William wore his cotton gloves and carried his cane. He asked, coming a few steps into the main passage, "if Oughtryn was yet home?" His voice dragged unquietly. The woman instantly answered that he was not, and "she could not tell why he was so late." Despite herself, as it were, a faint plaint was in her tone. She added, "He went for pasture for the horses for to-morrow and for the Friday," a fact about which Heans knew something. Sir William said he wished to speak with Oughtryn as soon as he came in, and the woman, with a step towards the kitchen, agreed to give him the message. She had pushed open the door, which was on the latch, when she again paused and asked, "was the gentleman going over to the horses?" Sir William having replied in the affirmative, "Mr. Spafeld," she said, "had given them to know he would bed them and see them comfortable." To this Sir William answered with an "Unheard of!" and a feverish tapping of his stick; finally he said he would step over and make certain. The woman gave a curious, deep laugh. "The young man's been over-jolly this

evening," she exclaimed with a sort of bitter amusement—and overloud in tone for her—and came somewhat heavily from the door. "He don't seem himself—not a sensible man. We thought—Miss Abelia and me—we thought he'd been doing a bit of drinking. We don't know."

"You should have summoned me," said Sir William, quietly. "Do you mean the man has been a trouble?"

"Oh, I don't know," said the woman, with a cool laugh. "He keeps Miss and me a-laughing—he does, but you, sir, mightn't think him so diverting like that. Miss has taken a queasy about something you said. Mr. Oughtryn being late, we were thinking he might bed the horses, and let well alone."

"I see," he said, and he looked very sharp in the face. "Oh no—oh no," he said, "you can be quite easy in the house! I will avoid any talk with the man if it will quiet your minds."

"Oh well, well!" ejaculated the woman, and she put up her hand and thrust open the door of the kitchen. She would have vanished from the passage only Heans called to her again. "I would like to ask," he said, "if any one was about my rooms to-day, besides yourself and Mr. Daunt? I have an anxious wish to know if you saw any one in the passage outside either door?" The woman answered jealously that she had herself seen none other than Commandant Daunt, but that she had been engaged for some time in the Chamber, Mr. Daunt himself calling after her, one of the women acting giddy on a ladder. After a silence she enquired bluntly if he had missed anything from the rooms, and he made answer that as far as he knew he had lost something of trivial appearance but of very great importance. He concluded that she had not that day gone over the rooms, and she said that was so. She volunteered, after a minute's silence, that there was one during the afternoon about the house—but she had never known her touch anything—and that was Conapanny. "She was squatting under the front windows, as she is used to do when Miss is playing in her room. I told her Miss was away."

Sir William did not enquire into the matter further, though he did not move. He seemed very sharp and uncertain. He was backing into the passage, saying as he did it, "Together with my loss, your master's failure to return is rather untimely"; when as he turned actually to the door he asked "if Oughtryn had been particular to say to what part of Hobarton he was going." The question, innocent as it sounded, and asked with head half averted, was given so much louder and more unnatural, as to seem the voice of a different person, and whether the woman noticed it or not, she answered with a sort of slow reluctance: "Stully's, I did hear him say, and Cliesby's. I couldn't say, hasty, which was most in mind."

Heans now lifted his glass to his eye and faced her stiffly. "Supposing I wished to send after him," he said, "would you seek him at Stully's paddock?"

"I would go to Cliesby's," she said, rather coolly than surprised, "him being overdue. But you'd not think it necessary to send for Mr. Oughtryn?"

"No—not likely," he replied; "but it is as well to know where he is . . . Cliesby's paddock is next the Ship Inn, I think—a field with a long stone shed?"

At this instant a step fell in the quiet, and Abelia Oughtryn groped her way into the door from the half-lit room. She stood with her head down and her indecisive hand on the wooden framework. Her shadowy dress was grey and simple, but the light shone upon her collar, serene head and face, which was white and afraid, with a kind of nobleness and quizzical darkness under the unquiet eyes. She spoke in a trembling, precise way.

"Father must have gone to Leeworthy's, Sir William, being so tardy. He said he would try beyond Boundary if there was no loaning to be had from Mr. Stully."

Sir William was frightened of something about the girl. He flushed, stuttered, and asked in a voice somewhat unctuously ceremonious, "Tell me, Miss Abelia, now through what gate would he go?"

She said so quietly, and her head so dark: "The gate to the Dalrymple¹ Road, Sir William."

"Indeed," said Heans, turning away, but coming back again. "Would he go far on the way to Bridgewater?"

"No," she said: "just beyond where there's the spring and the water-trough. There is a large gabled dwelling——"

"I remember," said Heans, rather vehemently, "a brick house by the roadside."

"Yes, and that lies empty, sir," the girl said. "They live in the cottage called 'The Hope' above the paddock."

"Egad, we are being too anxious!" cried Sir William, suddenly. "He will come in in a minute." And there he stopped short as if he feared he was being too particular in his enquiries; and indeed the girl had raised her head, and was now looking towards him, as she stood by the woman, with pale, quizzical, fluttering eyes. Thus the two. So they watched him go out, the woman downcast and like a figure of uneasy Fate.

Outside the small door the night was still, the sea clangorous in the darkening yard. Sir William had forgotten a lantern, and was about to return for it, when he saw the cave door was open and bore a soft, stationary glowing, showing that somewhere within was a remote light. There was no one between house and stable. He stopped not far from the house, but could hear no footsteps about the cave. He was in some trepidation, knowing that half his hold over the mad Spafield was gone, supposing

¹ Launceston

the fellow to have been frightened sufficiently by his innuendo to have broken into his rooms, and in so doing discovered the dead man's message. Even if that was so, Heans had something in hand, and it was to secure this as much as to fulfil a duty that he hazarded so late an encounter with him.

Outside the cave he again stopped, but there was no sound within but the mutter of the sea. From the remoteness of the light, he took it that it was placed in the harness-room, and as he came near the door, the reflection upon the hinges and the left post told him he was right. Within, all was dim and quiet, the horses coated and at their food, and a great deal of tidy straw beneath their feet. For a while he remained near the door, hearing nothing from the harness-room, and waiting for any one to move in the gloomy reaches of the stalls. In the very pallid light, made blacker by the glow from the other cave, motionless forms seemed to people the wooden divisions, if steady lack of movement persuaded of inanition. There was no human sound. With that curious sense of the absence of man, Heans felt there was no one there. Eventually he stepped into the stable, and thence through the opening into the lighted cave.

It was silent, the lantern hidden behind the chain of sacks, the walls and roof in a strong light. With a glance about the shadowed portion, he stepped across to the chain. As far as he could see, the rest was empty also.

He started at once to put his purpose into effect. Surridge's document gone or mislaid, and the evidence it brought as to this ruffian's nature near gone with it, it might be difficult to convince an old hand of Oughtryn's kidney and cares of the burial and resurrection in his cave, or win him to the peculiar suggestion of the soldier's aim—and certainly any one to whom Oughtryn might appeal. He regretted he had not at first risked the calm of his escape. The loss of the chapeau, so sharp upon what he had been seeing and overhearing in his private room, was dismaying, but as a man wishing to rouse another to a nasty fact, he felt he had yet something to back the suspicions he detected in his master, and his personal narrative. It may be supposed there were moments when he himself hardly knew what he was trying to do or trying to prove—beyond some reasonable excuse for an unmanly nervousness. It is not pleasant to find oneself the single butt of a murderer (a matured malignant), however remote his crime, and whatever the reason of his lying in wait upon you. Yet—a few hours and he might be out of this peculiar danger. He could still leave it alone, but for the girl and the beggar's behaviour in the stall! He remembered how suspicious old Quaid had asked outright if the soldier was "after them for something?" Gracious G—d, with the fellow's crimes and singular way, he thought he had a reasonable answer for that! That was a word with Oughtryn—Captain Hyde-Shaxton—or some magistrate of the police.

By this time, it is plain, Sir William, despite his decent way of putting it, was in a kind of nervous affright of the whole thing.

His purpose, as the reader may have guessed, was to sever and return with the bottle-neck and the running thongs. But most of all he was anxious to see whether they had been tampered with. We must mention here that when vehemently searching his rooms a few minutes previous, he had been surprised to find that volume of the *Plutarch*, which we know as "Surrige's," there with the others on the small table. It was curious—and threw him presently into new exertions after the chapeau—that he had been left that piece of corroboration. (Was the thief too cunning to break into the volumes, or hurried into indecision?)

Now, in the cave, he was at first sight relieved to see the great chain hanging in its place, half hidden under sacks and old horse-coats. He had no sooner put his hand upon it and jerked it, however, than his heart sank; there was no answering ring from the crack. As he pushed his way along it, he shook it twice and then again. No, the wall-chain made no answering jingle.

Heans paused for an instant to collect himself, and as he did so there was a curious thudding—either a landslip in the hills, or thunder—which shook the caves, and to which the horses rattled out their chains. The quiet that followed seemed reflected by the motionless lantern, which was raised on two red band-boxes against the yard-wall. A rat or native cat made a scurrying behind the harness-press, which drew Sir William's attention to the curtain by the south end, which had been drawn aside, showing the pommels of Abelia's side-saddle, and dangling from them the soldier's dirty white bandoliers and bayonet, and a large pair of leather shoes.

When he had again harkened, he continued his way along the chain to the end, where, above the row of sacks, he found that the bottle-neck had gone, while the leather thong had been freed of knots, or substituted by another having less, which was attached at the top end to something immovable, but which, on climbing up, he found to be a piece of forked wood, dead, and jambed into the narrows of the crack. The sharp disappointment induced by this discovery—the disgust—the loss of hope it meant—made Heans more shy of being under watch. He listened there another few seconds. Afterwards he stepped down and returned for the lantern, but, on searching, found beneath and behind the chaff-sacks only one or two minute fragments of brown bottle-glass. While drawing out the sacks' there was another loud scurry of rats—so heavy that he thought he observed a bag move bodily, and raised the lantern, staring among the spheres. One or two holed by rats were stacked loose upon the others, but he did not examine them, being satisfied no person of bulk and strength could be hidden between. As he replaced the light on the band-boxes, he was attracted by a glistening object behind them, and stooping down, he picked out

a square bottle, three quarters full of rum, and a curious little object made of string and oiled wood, which it will be remembered the brutish fellow dropped from his pack on the Tuesday afternoon he arrived at the house.

There was little in the juxtaposition of these articles which made for Sir William's composure, though the menace which troubled the villain most seemed rather that from the dead than the living. He threw them down, feeling considerable heaviness of oppression, and went over to Abelia's saddle. He was about to cast the man's belongings to the ground, but remembering his promise, turned and took his way straight out of the caves into the yard. There he stopped for some time looking about. A number of little stars were out in the sky, shedding their pale beams upon the walls of the house; yet unable to lighten the dark squares of the windows. There was a flutter of lightning in the south-west. He had been there about twenty minutes, when he was attracted by a thumping and crashing on the top of the caves. Moving further out and looking up, he saw the red-coat himself, walking among the bushes not far from the old gateway in the wall, and making west upon the lane. As though he saw that he was seen, he stopped, eyeing him with a cold and careful stare. Eventually, as Sir William put up his glass for a better look, he dropped what he had in his hand—a long implement or log of wood—and rolled forward through the bushes down to the eaves of the caves. He wore no shako, and at first sight, in the murk, it seemed a feebler, older figure than Spafield's, but this was a mistake. It was the villain's own long head and hectoring cheek-bones that arrived upon the brink. As the shadows forsook him, half in drink as he was, there seemed a something flabbier about that cushion chin, and a sort of blenching recurrence in that angry stare.

Heans did not like the look of him in that place, as things were, but thought, with the height of the cave between them, he would see what he would say. He therefore stood quiet about the centre of the yard, his cane caught in the middle, his baleful eyes upon the other's. The details of each figure were clouded to the other, if Heans' person must, he knew, be outlined plainer by the kitchen candle than was Spars' upon the slope and studded cave. Though Heans had seen him drop something further up, he perceived that he still held a large, brown object in his right hand, which dangled like a garment. With this in hand, and slowly picking his way over the ground, he approached and stopped about the middle of the roof.

Sir William says that they were silent for about a minute, the hard villain shifting back a little as his trousers and coat-facing caught the one light of the house. "I declare it's you standing there so stiddy," said he, with a deep, jabbering laugh, yet hanging darkly on him; "and a stern way you looks at me, just as if you 'ad the power of this earth and 'ell, and the

Mahour's¹ string was in your 'and—just for a moment in the liddle glove there which is on your show-cane. Oh, we've had our miff, we've, over the girl! I understands you well. Girls is for the protection of the gentlemen. It is a matter of trust from you to 'er. Ah, I follow you, honest, in what you want. Yet I remember you when you was a down peg only last night. That's all changed now, my noble! I was the whole pin then, by 'eaven! Something singler's been at Spafield since we met. Heaven deave you, here you a-dogging a bereaved man! It ain't a gentleman's act. A man's private in his ways when he's bereaved. Who'd think a gentleman of honour would 'ave his meanness! You'll raise my dander yet, you will! Why, I looks at you from these rocks and I says you're not so lively down in that there yard, yourself, with your hand upon your cane. So it is. Break your 'art, I know the world! I remember when I was young and admired. I use to be a smiling see-saw for the children to crow on. Now I'se a rotted board for the histing of the quick and dead. Do you see what I mean? At any rate, I face it stiddy."

Heans, who welcomed the groan of uncertainty he detected amidst the vacancies of the threatening villain, made a harsh clearing of his throat, and enquired what he was doing up upon the caves? Privately, as he looked upon the bold, old face and narrow angered stare, the gloves upon his cane were quivering with chill disgust and nausea.

The man gave him a long, unquiet look, swinging the object in his bandaged hand.

"If I'm laid out for it, sir," said he, with a quick step forward, and a faithless pretence of reassurance that was a poisonous threat, "I've only been a-hunting of the bettong¹ in these liddle rocks, as you can see by what I 'old here in my fingers!" (He snatched the object he held to his right hand, and elevated it a little, though his eyes were never on it.) "A good night's work," laughed he. "He spoke up for 'is 'andsome life, he did, but I ruined it for him, and then I followed him at my ease. Bless the little pimp, he thought to chouse me off with his inner-cent dodging. Plague it, gentleman, you don't believe me! Here, break your 'art, I'll cast him down for you, and you can carry it in to them amiable women! A singler, curious animal! Mind, sir, there's a weight in him to make him fall fair."

While still speaking, Sir William saw him swing the object against the sky and hurl it knowingly up into the air over the yard, whence it straddled over, and fell with a dull leap and a loud rattle close in front of his feet. Sir William, amazed at the accuracy of its direction, had raised his cane to ward it off, and

¹ Devil's.

² Kangaroo rat.

after it had fallen, did not at once take his eyes off the thrower, who regained his balance after his effort, with a troubled stagger. When he took a look at the little kangaroo with the grim head of a rat, which lay gleaming upon its face with its long legs spread upon the flags, he was sufficiently attracted by it to overturn it with his stick. Its bosom was transfixed beneath the arms by a long, flat knife, whose rounded blade projected three inches from the fur of its right side. The pressure of the blade and handle—which shone like a bit of pine—kept the animal's front paws crossed one upon the other.

"Look at him for an old one, my lord," gabbled the redcoat, folding his arms under a chill, aged laugh; "I've pinned him up so nice he can't do much—can he?—but supplicate Shebna with them little brown 'ands?" Heans, however, did not answer nor again give him countenance, and presently after he heard a soft but very sickening oath, and realised the fellow had cocked his dangerous back at him and gone muttering off. Heans himself, true to his promise to the women, had turned over to the house, but when he heard the man going, he turned about and watched his long, lank hair and Tartar face descend into the night over the escarp of the lane.

When he had gone, Heans returned to the animal, and removing a glove, bent down and felt its body. It was very stiff and cold. He rose again and was about to go, when, struck by a thought of his defenceless condition, and what he was about to attempt, he drew the knife from the animal, wiping it upon the pretty brown fur. He notes—with apparent irrelevance—when he withdrew the blade, the small wrenched hands of the rat fell apart "with quite a human gesture of release."

As for the poor weapon which Sir William Heans had found for his defence, it was laughable and crude enough, and apart from serving as a sign of the rascal's enmity, it was understandable why it had been discarded. The blade, about six inches long and slightly curved, had a gully or groove along the centre as in that of a sabre, and might have been a part of one, though now so blunt and ill rubbed as to be just recognisable as steel. The bit of wood into which it was fixed, and which served for a handle, seemed the section of the root of some bush-plant, which had been barked, and upon which Heans' fingers felt an uneven grooving. When Heans, quite shaken with the beastly encounter, at length reached his room, and had drunken a good draught of Oughtryn's "ale," and eaten sparingly and long of his "export" pig and pumpkin-pie, he drew out his "knife" again and imagined in the grooving upon the handle a rough carving of a human face, with a wisp of long hair behind, and a kind of ecclesiastical mitre upon its head. He became much interested in the supposition when, later in the night, he made some effort to sharpen the long blade with the aid of his toilet-scissors.

* * * * *

Before Sir William re-entered the house, he waited a few moments in the small entrance-door, till he heard the yard gate shut, and suddenly saw Spafield flutter like some huge moth into the light of the stable, and the gleam go out as he went in and stood a while looking about in the inner way. There was little sound of his feet on the flags. Presently the gleam of the light again shone, and did not go out, though Heans watched it for some minutes. Three times he rose from the supper-table, and groped his way through his bedroom furniture to the back window. On the third of these occasions he found the face of the stables dark, but for the spent rays of the light from the house. So it remained while he was there. On his way back to the sitting-room, he went again to the door, into the yard, and stood within, with it a little open, listening; and once again he opened it and stood looking up at the pallid and changeless cliff.

He heard the women move in the kitchen as he went from back to front, and noted that the opposite room was still open. He saw by the gleam on the panels that the stair-door had been shut. The noise of the sea was not in the house, which struck very quiet. The woman seemed her indifferent self when she came in to clear the table, and he thought it possible she and Abelia had found some comforting counsel. When he asked, "No sign yet of Mr. Oughtryn?" she answered, in a low voice, "No, but he may have gone with Leeworthy to 'Fraser's,' though it's against his custom to eat from home." She enquired, on the heels of this remark, "if the horses had had attention?" and he replied that "they had, and that he had had some words with the soldier," though privately he thought the woman was aware of that. He added that he had found the man's manner "wild and unsatisfactory," and he said it would add sensibly to his quiet of mind, if, till Oughtryn came in, the keys were turned in the communication and kitchen doors, and she and Miss Abelia stopped below. Madame Fate replied unconcernedly with "her and Miss's thanks, and they had turned the keys, and Miss had shut her room."

She was not, however, so composed as she appeared, for as her statuesque, bechignoned head was vanishing into the passage, she took affright at nothing, stopping, and plunging on again so sudden that the articles upon the tray she bore collided sharply, and one fell to the floor. In the stillness in which she stooped and groped after the fragments, Heans heard the voice of the soldier, not very high (rather low and harsh) singing in his room over the Chamber, and knew, and concluded the fellow intended it, that he had come into the house. As he sat listening to that intrusive booming and lowing, he wondered, above the menacing of himself, how the ruffian's wicked assurance

would stand him, locked alone above another's hearth—the old hearth stained by his young malice.

Murruda, yerrabá, tundy kin ara,
Murruda, yerrabá, min yin guiny wite ma lá.

Would he low and drink himself to sleep upon his squab? Would he remain vigilantly awake? Heans considered he could not trust for that night to a period of oblivion in his mind.

Sir William, though he endeavoured to compose his mind with an *Almanac*, hardly read a sentence. He put his door wide, and lay back or sat forward in the bed-chair, no sound in the hushed place escaping him. At nine o'clock, he rose and opened one of the windows, hoping, by standing there, to hasten the sound of Oughtryn's approaching steps. Among the ghosts of plants a cricket was crying, "Eve." He turned and again searched his rooms, but could not be certain of a single sign of intrusion or strange handling. Despite this conviction, he for a long while haunted both rooms in search for the dead carver's palimpsest.

During all this time he kept his ear on the large passage, along which, at intervals, came the man's voice. If the interval was overlong, Heans would rise in his chair, or pause in what he was engaged upon. As the minutes grew on, the man's lowing became sharper and more assertive, and the intervals between each outbreak longer. In his rooms Sir William Heans' pauses and ruminatings became proportionately more lengthy. After the half-hour, there was one lengthy silence in which the house was like a grave, and like earth into it he heard the ashes fall in the grate of one of the passage rooms. He thought, at the same instant, that he distinctly caught the tread of a shoe, and its creaking, in a room above him; but dismissed it as gratuitous. Not many moments after, an uproar of angry laughter and singing came in high and distant by his window, and, hanging near, he supposed the cut-throat fellow had moved from his pallet, and was either standing before a front window above the Chamber, or at work in one of the front rooms. It sounded to his ears that there was bravado and shaken assertion in the noise the man was making, yet that the villain was endeavouring (like a whistling urchin) to make an impression of ease, calmness and power on any one who might be listening. Eventually that became plainly his policy, whether the intrusion was directed at some growth of his bottle or the occupants of the house. He could be heard marching along the passages, and into one or more of the rooms, his shoes making a deep sound, and colliding more than once into furniture or door, the last perhaps intentional, as they were accompanied by a malignant laughing. If he was intruding, he was far from concealing it. He would suddenly begin to whistle or hum; sometimes bursting for an instant into a loud bawling;

but stifling it or dropping it as out of character and uncomfortable ; again giving a loud, angry, and taunting laugh, or a jeering monosyllable dragged out upon a silence. He carried a candle at first, but put it down about the centre of the house, as Heans saw by the bushes. Sir William fancied him with folded arms, and malcontent, stern face. Vanity, and threatening assertion, and a little fear : Sir William thought he could detect these. Were they the whole meaning of his disturbance ? He seemed to know that he was alone upon the floor ; he knew that those below could hear him.

Some time after, the man retreated along the passage, and took the light to his room. Heans, who rose to listen after the steps, heard them go over the hall, hesitate, and suddenly the stairs rang heavily with his descent. He made a loud indistinct shout as he advanced, and another as he retreated. Heans imagined from the careless noise that he was going out, but at the stair-bottom he came round, and suddenly he was at the handle of the door.

When it would not open to him, he seemed to stand there for a long while, and presently his slow, heavy steps thumped their way back up the stairs. Heans, who had come into the women's passage, saw, by the moving reflection, he had a candle. The women's door remained lit and open, but there was no noise from either that or the kitchen. At the top of the stairs the villain seemed to go into his room. The deep rumour of a door announced silence.

Some minutes after ten, Heans heard him again out in the landing, but with a scatter of jeering talk rather than singing. Sir William had been sitting with a *Plutarch* in his hand, but from the uneasiness he felt, he went over to the window. Spafford, by the reflection of the light, was for a time in the west rooms, and in one of these—though his footsteps were seldom quiet—was the stationary candle. Heans supposes that he must have left the light in one of the rooms and come very quiet along the front passage (there was a front passage along the upper story), for, happening to glance at the Roman figure, he noticed that it was trembling, and the next thing, he was conscious of the creak and thump of the man's shoes above his head. He could not say if he was there bent on some disturbing of himself, but he remained in the room for a considerable time, the sound rising and falling as he stumped in and out from there to the passage. All the while his voice, not high, was grumbling in a horrible rapidity of threatening. Heans rose angrily. He, however, heard some one speak at that instant in one of the lower rooms. He instantly calmed and filled and lit his tobacco-pipe, and stood smoking for a little in the passage-window. He felt, while there, there was a sort of bad oppression over the house, and even as he peered out past the sentry-box, the man's footsteps were blotted out by a rattle and shiver of thunder, while

almost as if that had been its herald, the moon topped the wall and made a shining in the garden. How black were the trees, how shiny was the long grass! The wretched Spafield must have been at the window above, for he stopped his walk. A little after, his feet went away down the passage with a peculiar tapping, and with the weight at the finish of the step. He then turned—if he was walking backwards—and made a hulking step or two which shook the floor. Suddenly his flight was stopped, and Heans heard him come slowly back. Again there was not a sound. Into that there fell a muttering, and, from somewhere muffled, there pealed out a dry harsh cry, like an infant's, but full of volume and hatefully daunted. Right upon it there was a heavy tumult and banging, then a great cry, and then a sudden 'clashing' of glass. Again a renewed uproar, and a space in which nothing could be distinguished. And last came a deep knocking and cries of "Your honour," and "Sir William Heans," and "Help, sir," and "Help for the officer, ladies," with a deadly mixture of cursing and groaning, half of which was lost in a banging and tumult that made the house ring.

When Heans came into the main passage, the woman was walking towards the stair-door, with her candlestick and a heavy pistol. She turned the key, and opened it. Spafield seemed to hear the key and his hoarse groan became lower. Sir William followed the woman through, passed her, and waited an instant. He took the candle at the woman's offering, but as she clung to the weapon, he left her at the bottom, and began to go up. Abelia's calm but twinkling face came into the door, but he heard her rapid breathing, and told them both not to move. The woman suddenly thrust the pistol to him over the banisters, and he took it, and went up. At the top he went across the bare landing to the corner of the passage. He stopped at the corner, cleared his throat, and said, "I am here." There was no answer, but a harsh oath from near the bottom, so he spoke again in his fine, ceremonious way, asking "where he was?" and "what had come upon him?" There was no answer while Sir William waited very stern and patient. He held up the candle. Some fragments of glass lay in the moon, some two-thirds along the passage floor. Suddenly there was a renewed knocking, and a low voice rose from somewhere complaining: "This here's the door!"

Heans advanced along towards the broken glass. Spafield's appeal came from a closed door opposite these fragments. "Come out, sir," said Heans, "and let me see what you are doing." There was again a low groan. Then swift and harsh: "The door's closed. I'm caught, I am. I'm in the woman's press here."

"Where is that?" said Sir William, coldly. "Speak in a distinct voice. Why don't you come out?" He put the candle down behind him and advanced nearer the door. At that

moment, he was annoyed to find that the women had followed him, for from the top of the stairs, a voice as stern as his own directed him to "the linen-closet: the door with the glass window."

The man mumbled a chill something, and Heans drew nearer. The door behind which he spoke was like the eight others in the passage, but had a window at the top, in which was a cross-piece: the nearer pane in which was broken out. The panes were placed high, but, in a little, he had a clear sight of the man's face, sunken, sly, and sallow against the glass.

"Ah, my lord," he cried out, "you'd never 'ave thought this of me! You'll turn it quick and let me out. Faith, I'm distressed! I'm the worse for my being in here!"

Sir William stared in great distaste at him for a while. "Well indeed, my man," he said at last, "if you can get in, you can get out! Now, what is it? You had better give an account of your behaviour."

"It's my mind, squire, my troubled mind," said the other, keeping his eyes on him; "ah, I never dreamed of this! Come, I trust in you, sir! I've 'ad enough. You can 'ave too much cold man. I tell you I got to drinking a bit and spiting round! And I takes to worriting about them old days, and walks in and out a-bravin' my sorrows, and a-singing them off me. But afterwards I goes off my level over a certain sound I heard, and I lays quiet. Then I rouses and goes after that, and goes a-braving nothing. And something spites me against going where I would, and especially into this 'ere old Punishment Closet, as it used to be. And being full of vinegar, I open the door and come in. And I was standing with my back to her, when "sough" she falls slap into the lock, and when I comes to open her, there was no handle. And I swear to you, I hears his Honour's old voice, like it was yistiddy, out there, bidding me "take my punishment." By my body, I tell you when I wrestle with her she wouldn't come for me, and when I smash away the glass, I couldn't reach her with my useless 'and! There, Squire, it was my unfortunate mind that dealt against me, and here I come against the butt-end of my life!"

Heans, after a considerable pause, said (and coldly), "That may be," and advanced, and put his hand on the handle. Before he turned it, he looked back once to the candle, and forward along the passage, and once, fixedly and long, through the front windows, where the moon lay in the wooden garden—but, eventually, he reversed the hasp, and when the door gave, turned his back and walked off slowly up the passage. His situation was not easy. He would have taken upon himself to keep the man shut in at his peril, and seemingly somewhat at Joseph Spafield's. For other reasons he could hardly leave the man. Yet he succoured the shaken wretch to what end—but a quiet house—to what end of private difficulty. For the service he

knew the man's nature well enough to conceive that he would rip the hand that loosed him. The temptation could not have been small. As he found by her enquiry, when, having taken the candle, he turned into the landing, the woman did not seem to entertain anything but the expectation of his release, and as usual she did not seek his opinion.

We know little more of this passage, than that he went instantly down, locking the door behind Abelia and the woman, whom he had found standing together in the landing. He passed back to his room after returning the pistol and informing them what had occurred. So hushed was the house that they heard, no doubt, as much as he. He told them the man was in a strange state of mind, and seemed to have become caught in the linen closet, where he had shut himself in fear of the wraith of Governor Collins, whom he had known in his youth. He added, in lighter pretence, that he thought him bad, ill, and "a drunken booby," but what he said did not change the fixed regard of the others. For the rest, he had conceived it beneath him to look behind him, or was fearful lest the frightened villain should run after them. He, however, heard the man come out, and pause outside the press door.

* * * *

We can see the soldier standing by the broken door, with his tall, black head and tag of hair, and large long sallow face.

* * * *

Sir William regrets, and so also does the writer, that some freer weapon than his is not in the breach to delineate the last incident of that Wednesday night. It seemed to him such a curious and plausible occurrence that happened under his eyes, and partially through him, that he would have wished to make a souvenir of it with some beautiful, monumental prose. The motionless witch of night, with its grey moon and streaky clouds, its occasional alarms, the ugly and fateful things which it had brought to life, the house yet wanting a master, the pair of boding women, the sly wretch above, and the uncanny shock he had put upon them (even if his panics were Heans' strange ally), these were but the brooding beginning to the singular end.

When he left Abelia and the woman, the time by his clock had not reached the half-hour. For a few minutes there was movement and steady discussion in the lower rooms, but not a sound above except, shortly after, one dull report immediately over the stairs: from the man's door it seemed. When he looked to see, the light was gone. Beyond this, though he was often on his feet, and kept his door open, and though the silence made a vault of the house, he never heard the man move. It occurred to him to consider with what sort of gait he had gone westward for his light, and across over the stairs. He was very quiet. He was not satisfied that his fright—sallow with fear as he looked—

would keep him still. He did not know whether to wish most for drunken disturbance or a silence which had too little reassurance in it.

At a little past the half-hour, he went down the way to the bedroom, and opened the yard door. A dull glow was on the flags and told of a kept fire in the kitchen, and then, along, the brick wall was dark, till up under the roof—greatly to his relief—on the left upright of the window next to that above the hall, there was a dull candle-light just quicker than the moon which fought it. Here too it was still; not a sound from the closed stable, the foliage of the yard and cave lit and sounding with a few drops of rain, the sea rising to an occasional belling. He gathered that his composure was still somewhat disturbed from the fact that for an instant he thought he saw a figure standing just within the old gateway up on the cliff; but a lighter greying of moonshine dispelled the illusion. A scrub-oak was growing on the moon side. As he turned, his mind hung on the grim character of the stone-mason, a daily witness of that opening, and not able to get by it to a word with his Moicrime. He returned somewhat easier through the hollow house after turning the key.

He set himself again to wait for Oughtryn. This he did restlessly enough for an hour and a half. For the warmth he put on his plaid jacket, and sat with his window open so that he might hear the least sound or the groan of the gate. He stood also for long periods at the window, and tried to penetrate the bushes below the fountain. He was almost afraid of the old platted place after what had occurred. Since he could not allow himself to drop his vigilance of mind sufficiently to read his book, he kept the volume in his hand and fell as he sat—or walked—to completing his last plans. He would escape on the Friday morning. It was his intention—perhaps a little resentfully—to use the fact of his assignment into servitude. And its success—indeed the application of this plan—would depend on whether Oughtryn paddocked the horses with Leeworthy or what other acquaintance. Were the man one he knew to be acquainted with his master—and himself—and could he learn the whereabouts of his dwelling without rousing the old convict's surprise—he would carry his saddle there on the morning after next and inform the fellow that he was bidden by Oughtryn to take two horses to the farm at Bagdad. If all well, he would ride off, passing the Ferry and the Brighton police post on Oughtryn's well-known nag in its usual direction. He would afterwards drop the horses in the bush, and wait for the night coach near some wayside dwelling. Till dusk Oughtryn would think him at Fraser's or Six's. After that, Oughtryn would wait, perhaps an hour, before going to the latter place. He would then visit other places, but hardly make a fuss earlier than twelve or one. This not considering his pre-occupation. Should the fellow, for some reason, refuse him the horses, he would throw away the saddle and return here, or

better, to some near-by lurking-place. At 6.30 the carriage with Carné.

It would serve his turn, thought Sir William Heans. True—as we think may have occurred to him the while he was seated over the fire, for he speaks of a feeling of despondency—no very creditable arrangement to satisfy the mind of an English gentleman. Alas, too little good-faith with these people who had been agreeable to him! Entailing a plaguey double part and a treading on the good nature of the family and the *manes* of the enseamed old dwelling which had given him roof. He must have felt he was in his way (like the rascal Spars) making a sort of troubling and wounding of privacy, alas, a little wounding of faith! He who would fain have left a decent memory of himself in this room.

Happening to be in his bedroom about twelve o'clock, and being heavy with the day's chances, he composed himself to lie and listen awhile upon his bed. The fires in the breakfast-room and kitchen were the only sound, and the only light the soft window-shine from the cliffs upon the heavy furniture. If somewhat troubled about Oughtryn, he knew that he was a "punter" at Fraser's, and might have been persuaded to a late stay against habit and punctuality. He did not propose to approach the women, and increase anxiety, by an offer to go after him, till an hour and a half after Fraser's closing time. Even after that he felt a reluctance about leaving them. Despite, however, of his endeavour to rest, he lay vigilant and stiff. More than once, he sat up and drew aside the curtain of his "tent-bed," thinking this or that creaking of cabinet or fall of incinerated wood was the lock of the hall door, never to be summoned upon his feet by a succeeding thumping of footsteps nor the stirring of Abelia and the woman, whom he knew must be lying awake. He sat there alarmed by many a voice of dumb wood and speechless walls, yet sinking back to consider how he might most prudently drag from the old man the whereabouts of the paddock, and convey to him the dangers of a day marked with blood, and with it that of the lost stain upon the Chamber boards.

* * * * *

He was not certain whether he had fallen asleep, or was so deeply immersed in his thoughts as to be startled out of a species of repose, but he was awake suddenly to the motionless night, and to the distinct and insistent "clanking" of a chain. The sound was remote yet clear, and it would pause, begin again, cease for a minute, and then once more resume. Sir William, even while he sat up and attempted to locate it to some particular portion of the house, was reminded of the ghost stories of his youth, and when, failing this, he had followed it in his mind's eye to some position more removed or outside the walls, was inclined to consign it to the stable and a restless horse, but was not satisfied that it was made by a moving animal, nor that the chain

of any one of them had such a sound. It was not a heavy chain, and it rang against the stone as though the horse had broken its fastening or lay upon the floor. There was no drumming of the manger. He could barely picture the beast lying prone, yet seized with such continual strange alarms. Some misgiving made him move with great care to his window. The wooden shade was still drawn. The moon was nearly overhead, and showed the stable closed and quiet. All seemed breathless, the top of the gum silvered and twinkling faint.

We have said the three tarred doors were shut, but as he held by the window stone, Heans put his face closer to the glass, for he had become convinced there was a gleam on the right side of the square of the furthest air-hole—that between the first door and the gate—in fact, he had a fancy there was a light lit and covered within.

His hand sought the leprous divisions of the glass and pushed the sash up. It seemed two or three minutes before he caught anything (not even the sea was audible), when there rose as from nowhere a faint "clanking," and a little "jingle" of a chain. Both were very low, but he believed they came from the cave, and again his mind misgave him at the stony clatter of it. He endeavoured to descry through the pane whether the bolt in the first door was shot, but the moon was too dim. He stuck, however, to his fancy about a glimmering in the throat of the port-hole. He drew back. He decided to satisfy himself about the light. If he was mistaken, a horse might be loose and at the straw.

His "weapon," which he had christened mockingly his "poniard," he had hid in the sitting-room, and he did not go after it, not wishing to rouse the house to his departure. He took, however, a riding-cane from the twisted nob of his toilette. He at once moved with care into the passage, opened the door, and went out. The flags were wet and there was a slight sprinkling upon his cap. In the kitchen the fire yet shuddered on the window, and the soldier's light still cut the window-frame in the upper part of the house. Sir William eventually released the handle, and went very slowly across the yard. He distinctly heard the chain ring, stopped, and tried steadily to place it. Again he moved across. As he went he watched the throat of the port-hole deepen to a steely glare. About ten yards off, he again paused as he became aware that the hasp of the bolt was padlocked down, and the padlock empty. Something peculiar in the outline of the door itself attracting him, he put up his glass. He saw presently that the bolt had been shot outside the slot, and that the door was ajar to that extent.

At the same instant a heavy "slither" of a chain came from inside, as though a horse had broke from his fastening and was pulling his chain about after him.

Heans drew softly to the door. He perceived by the shimmer in the hole there was a kind of a light, and when he had put his

face to the crack, and had accustomed his eyes to the semi-dark, he saw what seemed like a lantern in the second of the mangers, covered by a coat towards the door. This was the stall next to that in which was his own beast (which was half asleep upon its feet), and in strange juxtaposition, perched right up on a partition, he made out a figure which he knew must be that of Spafeld, leaning against the back wall of the cave. The silent place rang with his breathing. He had raised in his hands a pole to which was fixed the hilt and single rusty prong of a hay-fork, and this he would poise slowly up and insert in the crack above. When Heans first made him out, he was hanging to the pole, resting his lowered head against it. But presently he raised that tall black head, and curving his shoulders upon the wall, felt for something with his prong above, and when he found it—with sounds either of great exertion or heavy suppression of excitement—pushed it downward a few inches or a yard, to the accompaniment of a heavy rattling, and that sound which had brought Sir William from the house.

He wore no coat, but his accoutrements swung on his shoulders, and he gripped the top of the partitions as he went along with skin slippers.

It was evident that he was somewhat retarded in his work by a wish to keep the chain as quiet as he could. He had a white eye also to the horses. He looked once fair in Sir William's face with eyes that had a sly and deadly drag, before which he caught his breath. So Sir William Heans found the fellow at his work. Indeed, the stable held a curious figure—a new and deadly effigy—balancing upon slow, sly limbs, muttering and waving with its pole along the cobwebbed wall, as if it would conjure to light, rather than drag from it, the bloody secret among the half-finished scrawls and wooden effigies so deeply graven there. There he panted, spoke, strove, and stared behind him; singularly silent for so large a figure; visible as a wraith is visible; every instant fading a little more out of linement as the prong searched lower along the lip, and the chain answered and fell protesting over the stalls.

Thus was explained the noise Heans heard.

It may be wondered—with so much at stake—that Sir William did not at once fling open the door and confront him. Perhaps you and I would have been chary of interfering with him! Heans gives the impression that in the disgust of the instant (all the terrible facts being so apparent) he could not determine for his own interests and the interests of the roof under which he sheltered which course to take. Whether to stop him, whether to be a witness to his hateful struggles till he had brought to light the poor remnants of a man, whether to interfere before he could gain possession of them, whether and whence to summon some eye beside his own (a prisoner's) in evidence—such a quandary seems to have kept for some minutes the smell of the tarred door in his

nostrils. It seems he had made up his mind, throwing compunction aside, to leave the villain at his work and summon the woman—but time prevented him. In the agitation of the moment, he ran three steps towards the kitchen, slipping down on the flags. He then turned back, being fearful that the persuasion of the woman, or Oughtryn, if he was now in the house, would require time. When he did regain the door, and got the glisten of the yard from his eyes, he missed the villain from the wall, and presently, there was the silent fellow beyond the horses, climbing without the pole over the mangers, and in an instant he saw him leap and land upon the stack.

It seems that Sir William's emotion mastered his anger and agitation, and for some while further he withdrew his eyes and waited in the dropping rain. When presently, preparatory to entering, he was endeavouring to follow the movements of the man—that is, the indistinct place of them, for a space, if his slow and careful movements were audible, they were uncertain to the eye (in point of fact he had lowered his body behind the stack of straw) when Heans had actually pulled the door back a fraction, he was immeasurably startled to see something like a second human form passing between himself and the moon of the lantern on the wall. It was without sound. It came out of the harness-cave, and went along halting and feeling at the partition of each stall. After there came a violent jerk and jangling from the stack, it did not move beyond that partition that was beyond Abelia's grey.

He saw dimly who it was, as its head, bound in a white handkerchief, passed opposite the reflection. Gracious G—d, it was Conapanny, the native woman! As the shadow passed from stall to stall, Heans saw her lift her left hand and deftly pull the handkerchief from her head, thrusting it in her dress. She shook a singular bush of fine stiff hair about her face. She carried, strapped upon her back, something resembling a red Government blanket, the which, when presently she stopped and drew it about her shoulders, Sir William saw to be not a blanket, but a shawl of great beauty. (It was ever after an idiosyncrasy of Sir William's to asseverate that it was a shawl. Was it in verity any more than the scarlet covering allotted the blacks, and pardonably mistaken by one enthralled with the elevation of her history?)

After there came the noise from the corner, she did not move beyond the grey's stall. But she stood upright, as with an effort, beside the stone partition. It was extraordinary how youthful, yet how threatening she seemed. Who was she? Did she make a passable shade for yonder cold deserter? However she came by the secret, she was making a bold attempt to frighten the frenzied miscreant from the stack—perhaps to snatch from him her own? Yet Conapanny, old campaigner, illimitable mimic that she was, breathed audibly, as though her body was obsessed with groaning anguish.

Heans, in a few seconds, heard the hay give, and the man

jump upon the stones in the stall next to that which had the stack. He could not see him move, but heard him panting over some work over which he stooped. Suddenly Sir William saw the sallow and black of his long head above the stall. It was then that Conapanny gave a kind of whimper, and he in answer a low gabble of surprise, but where he was he could hardly see her for the end-post. He moved about that sallow patch that was his face, once upon Sir William, and once flashed it upon the wall, where over the light, and lined blackly in it, the carving of Governor Collins stared grotesquely on the ceiling. He then swung something upon his shoulder and came quick and quiet out of the stall, into the post of which he staggered with his burden with a noise that rattled and tumbled a horse upon its feet. After lingering there till all was quiet, he appeared, nodding silently along, his head down, in the passage before the stalls. He seemed to bear a kind of tarpaulin sack upon his shoulders, its mouth bound with a rope, which frisked with his gait like the tail of a lamb. He must have again heard the blackwoman, for Heans, the watcher, saw him sharply throw up his pale nose and eyes; and there he saw her, almost, but not quite, a part of the stones of the grey's stall.

He drew aside, stopped, and gave a low sound like a shuddering bray. As Sir William Heans pushed inside, he saw the man dart to the wall, and the tarpaulin jerk up and fall from his hands, as he clutched and whipped out his bayonet. The mass fell with a heavy echo against the end door, and as it did so, Spafield shuddered into and along the wall for a few feet, his bold head turned back. Heans knew that he moved from the scrape of his bandolier against the stone. For the contrary reason he knew that presently he had stopped.

Conapanny's shadow did not move, but there was a slight rustle in the straw about her bare feet. The man turned round, rose, and scraped a few steps back. He stopped before he reached the stall, rose upright, and went nearer to the figure of the black. He seemed to sway before her, yet try to make her out. He seemed to debate for a wicked instant what he might do with this. His attitude, with the steel nursed against his stomach, was blandly fatal to her, curbed yet with some old nausea of the veins. Then, thinking better of it, he staggered away and caught the rope of the tarpaulin—eyed her a little—swung it with a crash to his shoulder—eyed her yet a little—and then, with his right hand feeling the wall, stepped dangerous and reviling along the stable to the last opening.

Just in the door, dark with the light behind, Sir William Heans stood. He remained there, pale and baleful, with his cane quivering in his hand. Spafield saw him, and stopped not far from the door, leaning with his hand upon the wall. The surprise drove a moan or a grunt from him, but with a flash behind, he came on saying, "Stand aside. I don't like your looks."

"Drop what you have," said Sir William Heans, "and you may go out."

"Why should I drop what I have?" he gabbled, pausing again. "Why should I drop what I have?"

Sir William told him once more to drop what he had.

"A fine man, you, to interfere with a man's recreation," said he. "Out o' doors and a prisoner; By b—— you'll get into heavy trouble under orders!"

"Joseph Spars," said Heans, in a calm voice, "drop what I will never allow you to take away from these caves."

"By 'eaven, you won't!" cried Spafield, huskily, "then for the love of G—d, let me away!" and he flung aside the rope, staggering to the door. He came feeling before him with his hands. Sir William whipped aside to go out into the yard, and at the instant he was in that position, with his eyes yet inside upon his face, Spafield cried out, "I'll spoil your beast's powle,"¹ and making a spring, flung himself bodily upon the doorway, so that though Heans was agile, and all but cleared the post, the miscreant caught his right foot in his hand, and brought him by that, and a dislocating wrench, to the ground. Here, despite his struggles to free his foot, and though Heans rained blow after blow upon his fleshy gyve with the knob of his cane, it pulled him closer and yet closer inward, till as Sir William attempted to rise for his succour upon his left foot, he was stunned by a covert blow about the post—he supposes "from a skin moccasin"—and fell back upon the flags.

Oughtryn, however, who was in the kitchen, scolding across the hollow passage, heard a curious sound, and ran to the window. He saw the cave door ajar, and thought there seemed something like a human figure on the ground. He did not know Heans had gone out, but was instantly frightened by the fancy that it was his "speckled clothes." Even while he made them out, a man came out of the stable, staggering over the obstruction, and walked, with something hanging on his back, through the yard gate. He thought, by his white breeches, it was Spafield, of whose doings he had been informed, and he threw up the window, and sent his name after him. The shout had but left his tongue, thrown shrilly on the stone chamber of the yard, when yet another figure rushed from the stable, following Spafield out of the gate. He saw that she had bare, grey feet.

¹ Skull

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE DEAD-WATER

(I) A CARRIAGE DRIVE

THERE was no end to Mr. Daunt's understanding—his experience of what was wisest. Early on Thursday morning, a messenger arrived at Pitt's Villa, with a note, hoping that Mrs. Shaxton would accompany the commandant to the Cascades Prison, and that she would be pleased to expect the fly at thirty past two. The letter contained something more. There had, it seems, been some arrangement, but it is still a matter of doubt for which of the many reasons Mr. Daunt repeated the request, and for which it was accepted by Mrs. Shaxton. Of course the sending of the message intimated, in a stern and courteous way, that the Commandant was ready to keep to himself the "accident" to Captain Shaxton. It might have been meant only to convey that point. As well it wrote in polite cold English that it would be a sensible move. Did the matter leak out through "Oughtry's household," and the abrasions on Shaxton's face, the preparations for Sir John and Lady Franklin's entertainment would be jeopardised—irremediably, it was likely—and an unhappy meeting take a formidable importance. Did, however, Mrs. Shaxton keep to the arrangement to drive down with Mr. Daunt (the "patient, he was told, had been less nervous and distressed"), it would render any rumour of it burlesque and out of court.

We wonder if Matilda accompanied the Commandant for any of the reasons in or even between the lines of his message. It is known she did not inform her husband with whom she was going, and, evidently, he did not suspect her. She left him in his bedroom. Mr. Daunt had appointed a place in Davey Street at which he would join her, and the carriage had picked him up. Why, then, if she was not moved by this somewhat urgent argument, did she—whom Carnt, in his amusing way, had called "nothing human alien to her"—go down through the heavy rain that afternoon in the Commandant's fly?

Do not let us be sentimental about it. Yet do not let us be hard. Her action is only too easily explicable in a hard way. Can we not give something to "womanly forgiveness?" Hobartor

knew in the morning, through Captain Carne and Garion, of the mounted police, that Heans had produced and forwarded the handkerchief pad—it was said, with singular good taste—and old Chedsey had examined it on Garion's verandah. So all seemed right on that score. Why then did she surprise Hobarton by her feminine *volte face*, her "charitable journey," her quiet turning upon fortune in the afternoon?

We know that she had heard on Wednesday evening something that Hobarton did not know. Indeed, Hobarton did not know all then, nor for some time after.

Of course, in a hard sense, she went to save her poor old husband and herself from further danger from this skilful man. It may well be the poor lady was still frightened of Mr. Daunt. Yet this could hardly be, when she had known him so well. Looking back on her history, and its connection with Mr. Daunt, he appears on the whole in quite a protecting light, if severe and determined, with the two exceptions, so unaccountable. Again, Daunt had shown discretion when attacked by her headlong husband, and perhaps she felt she owed him something, as well as the prisoner who stood by. Or perhaps she was touched by his very weakness—as we have once already hinted, and as history tells great Queens have been of those prisoners who had been their companions, and who had turned aside to be unkind to them, even to "grudge the continuance of their lives." Perhaps, again, there was something about the Commandant she liked that no man was open to—it seems the way of women to deal in that fashion. And last—let us be hard for once—perhaps she agreed to go because of her old attachment for the prisoner, Heans, who might have increased the Commandant's dislike for himself—by diverting the pad. It was not believable of any one, yet if such a gentleman as Mr. Daunt were socially ruined, would Sir William Heans be worse placed or any differently treated?

We know there were those who "protested" she wished to "increase her figure" by pretending to countenance the Commandant; that the lady was at the bottom of it. We have no leisure for the quags of embittered enmity. There is no doubt the Commandant approached her, and that on this occasion he "made no mistake" of the state of her feelings, whatever that mysterious one had been. Despite of the comments of Cadet Tipton and Miss Meurice (already chronicled) that "old Daunt was in a funk," and that "his visit meant he was at Matilda's feet," we cling to the fact that she was a good and wise lady, and that the simplest explanation is often the truest. Looked at in its frankest terms, was she more than courageous, did she more than accept Daunt's implied petition for forgiveness, and go and shed a calming drop in the ear of a distracted woman?

By arrangement Daunt stopped the carriage at the turn from Davey Street; just beneath the very oil-lamp under which she

had dropped the purse. He was protected in a blue greatcoat, and held an umbrella over his hat. Someone who saw him as he entered the white-wheeled carriage said that he had the manners of a grave and reassuring gentleman, and heard the words rapidly uttered, "I was on the point of thinking your courage was not the weapon I have known it."

What they said, how they politely whiled the way, as they drove down the short distance to Macquarie Street, and along to the Cascades, we know little, and we hazard a guess it was little enough. Perhaps the reader can see Daunt looking from the window, as he sat beside the lady he had so hurt. We know, however, just so much: that Daunt comforted her with the assurance that the distance to be traversed in the prison was infinitesimal—"in at the gate and up Major Leete's stairs—and to the woman who had so enchained our poor friend!" And she had said, very agitated, she was only frightened of seeing some cold face that wouldn't accept her, and which she could never forget. And Daunt answered: "Ah, our Mesdames Les Gehennes¹ are under lock and key to-day!" He was very cool and steady, and in these later days it would have been a kind of rudeness to speak of him as "efficient." The window was down, and he sat rather heavily, with his small hand upon the door: in the narrow road lifting his hat sharp to a black-whiskered turnkey and a Mr. Six, the latter the collector of curios, such a pale, draggled figure for the Commandant to notice so markedly. Mrs. Shaxton, however, sat forward, her eager neck poking from her pretty, white collar and shawl, her eyes hot and narrow in her bonnet. Six reported they were red, but as he was almost in tears of excitement himself, how could he have perceived so much through the rain? Of what use is it to hang about the thudding hood of that old vehicle! What happened, however, when the Commandant had seen her under his umbrella through the tall gates, we have an account. Mr. Six ran back almost to the bridge, and saw the gentle creature go in in her brown coal-scuttle, with the gold riband and the grey feather.

* * * * *

Daunt had spoken about the woman's hand-paintings, and he took Mrs. Shaxton into the side room under the arched gate, pointing out the pretty pieces of band-box stacked and slung among guns, chains, tawse, gags, and other implements of correction. Matilda pretended to examine one or two, and bought a dark red rose held in an infant's hand, which Mr. Shaneson said, with a clarion laugh, was also his favourite. The prison accountant, Mr. Carnt, was seated at his desk in the corner be-

¹ Old name for the torture of the rack.

yond the slant spy-window, and he rose in his shrunken broad-cloth, watching them all the while they were there, with one hand on his papers. Matilda, though she had the side of her bonnet towards him, thought him a dispirited little man without his hat. She looked again in his direction when Mr. Daunt named him and enquired after his health. It was strange of him to laugh such a wild and silly answer. Daunt, who was waiting behind Matilda, said, in a sort of subdued aside, "Mr. Carnt, you are looking oppressed with this place. Shall we put you out of it for a bit?" And Carnt muttered, with a wild laugh, "it was certainly time he had a rise; would the Commandant get him a secretaryship to Mr. Montague?" Oh, how ironically Mr. Daunt nodded his head! At the door she gave him a bow with Mr. Shaneson, but he turned pallidly away.

* * * *

There were some neat back stairs, and afterwards, in a small, oblong room, through a door on the left, there was the woman "who had so enchained our poor friend." A tall, slim figure, with reddish hair, and a long, fine face, was seated with a book by a fire in an inner corner. She stooped slightly, and seemed from the way she had her knees doubled beside her chair to be in a sad mood. Yet the marble face which looked up at Matilda Shaxton was at first so unwelcoming and unfriendly that she stopped in the door: her little umbrella clutched in her soft hand. A look at her surprised, small face softened the other's somewhat—not much, but as it were allowing herself to be interrupted. She lowered the book she had been holding, eyeing her with a jealousy less superior and dejected.

It may be supposed that she had read there through the years of her punishment in this noble and pale jealousy of the mind.

Daunt's voice said, "This is Mrs. Hyde-Shaxton, prisoner. See how kind! I have prevailed upon her to come and talk with you."

Madam Ruth answered in a voice hardly audible: "It is you, sir? Come in, madam. I may not rise, madam." There was an embroidered black chair by the second bed, and she drew up her knees about her book, and indicated it with quiet grace. "Madam," she said, "why have you done this for Madam Ruth! It is heroic!"

"Please," Matilda said, looking at her with strained brave eyes, "you won't be troubled or disturbed with me. I am told you are better. Ah, that's better news! And now you're in the fair way to health?" She came forward beside the other woman, standing between her and Daunt, and stood looking down.

Madam Ruth looked up white, dejected, and rather discomposed than touched. "Why, madam, it is nothing," she said, with a perverse softening of her proud face. "They say it is

mere disobedience. But you have come here with an open mind. I see you are not afraid of poor Ruth and her perverseness. You have bought my picture, madam? Ah, it would be happier if we had it all in our helpless hands like that rose!"

Mrs. Shaxton, after a motionless pause, moved away and sank upon a chair, which Daunt had lifted near the fire. She raised and glanced from her bonnet at the little picture in her trembling hand. "True," she said, "this rose is too often like our health, and that is the kind of clasp we have upon it. . . . But you have so many accomplishments: your hand-painting and your studies. . . ." The speaker turned and examined the elaborate embroidery upon the bed at her side. And for a few sentences the women talked on these and kindred interests—each with a sort of accomplished kindness—the visitor leaning forward with an eagerness just free from feverishness, the other sunk in her chair with a noble, half shrinking dejection.

Daunt, having put his hat down on a table by the window, and examined for a long while a sketch of a dead knight which was there, and the books which hung above the bed, came back and stood a little removed between the women, his gloved hands stroking his side whiskers with a sort of brooding air. His eyes were upon a painting over the chimney of an old rough-cast house among decrepit trees. Yet he seemed to listen rather than look at what was before them. More than probably he heard only such scraps and snatches of the talk as "By Heaven's Providence. . . . A mercy it was not on the night of the ball. . . . They had the day's grace," being only half with them. Or possibly the malfesance of the night was clinging upon his shoulder, and he saw only that he was there with the wife of Captain Shaxton, in the cell of the artist-woman. Matilda Shaxton and Madam Ruth more than once lifted glances to his rigid cheek.

"Ah, madam," said Madam Ruth, in answer to sympathetic Mrs. Shaxton, "I protest, you are as stern as the gentlemen. Do you too tell me I can sadden myself at my will? The gentlemen are John Knoxes, every one of them; to them a woman's will is her one reason."

"Indeed, prisoner," said Mr. Daunt, breaking somewhat wearily in, "speak gentler if you can! We have ladies and gentlemen in our prisons who can do that and more. No one has ignored the sad cause of your suffering, nor the necessity there is of overcoming it. No one has pretended to himself you have no cause. Mrs. Shaxton will express by the gift of her presence the sympathy we have so clumsily spoken."

Madam Ruth fingered her great book, staring dejectedly into the fire. She did not show any feeling—unless by the proud and rigid paleness of her cheeks. Her thin shrinking head and neck lay like some sad sculpture upon her black dress and shawl: the calm harshness of her set face, the gentle coronel of her soft hair.

"Mr. Daunt," she said, "you speak as usual as if you knew

the depth of all difficulties. Do you indeed know the bottom of all my secrets? I am in fear of you. You are a gentleman of so much experience."

"You in fear of me, Madam Ruth!" he answered, with a sharp quiet laugh. "In what way, tell me, could a watchful care do more to make you resigned?"

She answered nothing.

"Then why, faithless prisoner, shame me before Mrs. Shaxton by telling me you have me in such awe?"

"Indeed, I know that you consider me," she said, yet never looking up from her dejection. "And you do it from your habit, sir."

Mr. Daunt might have said to the singular woman, "Expect more of humanity than that and you will get less," but what he said was: "You are open with me, madam. I will be frank with you. I have besides a strong personal belief in and regard for you."

"Fie, sir! you mean I have not your dislike. Well, though you do not hold me in disapproval, still I am in dreadful awe of you."

"But honestly, madam," said he, advancing to the mantelpiece and taking in his glove a parrot's feather of scarlet and green, blue and yellow, which lay there, "if you had that disapproval—even my dislike—would you, while you behaved, fear my firm determination of mind?"

Without moving her face, Madam Ruth gave a quiver of those despondent shoulders. "Ah, do not hate me, Commandant Daunt," she said, in a low, care-nothing way. "I shall be afraid for my life."

"As much as that?" he asked, speaking with a sort of grave shrug. "And just because I warn you to grasp after your own health?"

"Indeed, sir, how kind of you to confer my peace back upon me!"

He dropped the feather upon the mantelpiece.

"You would not have us let you drift into folly," asked the pale, stern man between the two women, "without a protest against so weak and foolhardy a policy! See, I warn you against a grave danger. Sympathy is a hold-fast and a medicine, but where the penalty is grave, we do not haggle with our doctors, or secretly amuse ourselves with the pretensions of well-wishers. Get well, madam, and be discreet. Take the safer way—I beg you—though upon it your feet are leaden, and your secret hope and longing have been unsatisfied."

He spoke somewhat harshly. Madam Ruth's shoulder quivered up a little, her head drooped yet further, and her thin fingers clasped and wrestled with the leather corners of the ash-grey book in her lap.

As for eager Matilda, she reddened in her bonnet and cried

out: "Stop, Mr. Daunt, you speak too gravely. Do not misunderstand him, madam. He means divertingly. Indeed, sir, are you one to—can the best of us—advise upon opportunity, and how we shall brave our disappointments, and the things that menace us?"

Daunt drew back with a tragic look. "I am not fit—I am not fit," he muttered briefly. "Speak for me, madam. You are a healing in yourself. I was forgetting I had prevailed upon your lenient heart. This shall be the drawing-room of a private acquaintance; it shall have no bad record. I will use not one further word but simple kindness—I promise you—not one."

Matilda said nothing—indeed, seemed confused and troubled she had said so much—but throwing the crossed *ruches* of her shawl aside, she put her hand upon the book where Madam Ruth's hands moved. The latter raised her head from her still lassitude.

The anger in Mrs. Shaxton's voice seemed to have attracted her. She slowly moved aside the five wrestling fingers over the five hot ones. "I am a sour woman," she said in a trembling and petitioning voice: "a hermit who has forgotten how to like—indeed, or thank. You have braved me, Mrs. Shaxton, and it is to Commandant Daunt I owe the fact that you are here, and my life is broader. Mrs. Shaxton will come again one day before I go. Madam, will you let me paint a picture of you as you came into my room? Mr. Daunt—won't you bring Mrs. Shaxton again? Don't—don't misunderstand a harsh woman, Mrs. Shaxton, Mr. Daunt. And madam, let a sour woman say, do not be vexed with the Commandant. He has been very good to me. And he speaks of you, madam, with a sort of reverence."

Did she know he had not always spoken so of her?

Matilda rather wildly answered: "Yes, I will come. I would not have had this pleasure had Commandant Daunt not chosen me, and assured me I should find some one who would like to see me. There, Madam Ruth, perhaps after all the Commandant knows us better than ourselves! Mr. Daunt persuaded me the sight of a lame duck like me might do you good."

Her staring eyes held the other's with the brightness of tears. Madam Ruth looked at her without tears, her white fingers holding upon her hot hand.

Daunt had observed the prisoner severely, his face not softening much. If he had an opinion, he was not for surrendering it at their devotion. With just sufficient civility for manners, he bowed, saying "he would be glad to have the honour of again escorting Mrs. Shaxton." He added, with a stern sharpness of feature, "it was surely the kindest of motives which had urged her to make a second journey, while the prisoner's sudden offer to make an effort and devote herself to colouring a portrait of her visitor, was surprising and good news: unless," he con-

cluded, saddening and making a little joke of it, "unless it will have an additional attraction for Mrs. Shaxton to possess a souvenir of herself standing against the bars of the prison?"

And Madam Ruth said in her pale, harsh way, "she would like to paint her, but not by the window." "Dear madam—as you came in by the door, with the Commandant's inflexible face behind your bonnet."

"Indeed," cried Mr. Daunt, laughing rather loudly and pacing away towards the window, "indeed, indeed, do I appear so grim as this?"

And there he stood looking out upon the cosy, dripping court.

"Ah, well," said Matilda Shaxton gently—and the face in the bonnet near Madam Ruth's stared and smiled a little—"it is not all a good world outside. And bars, if they keep in, shut so much out that we might not have seen or been vexed with. That is an idea congenial to me—if you will allow it. I wish you would paint me at your window, Madam Ruth; where you have sat so long. If you will bring me down here, Mr. Daunt, quite soon, and Madam Ruth thinks I will make a good drawing, I will dress in my best for it."

As for Captain Daunt, he stood steadily by the window, weightily feeling his palish face; urbane enough in his white cravat, high-shouldered great-coat, and wellingtons, if somewhat too occupied with stern matters for true good manners. He roused himself with a heavy shake to answer Matilda Shaxton.

"I promise Mrs. Shaxton a very willing servitude," he said, and gave a little harsh bow and smile, but did not turn. "It is truly angelical in her, upon my word it is! And what a healthy pleasure for the prisoner! I promise you, I will give it attention after our historic night, and even arrange with Leete before we leave." And then he turned to the table, took up his hat and cane, and stood staring solemnly at the unfinished painting which hung above it.

Major Leete presently hobbled to the door upon his stick, and softly requested an interview with Mr. Daunt. The Commandant immediately went out, leaving the door ajar, and he and Leete were heard talking in a low tone. For some while longer, Mrs. Shaxton talked with the shrinking, noble-looking woman by the fire.

(2) OUGHTRYN'S STANDARD AND MR. MAGRUDER'S

Charles Oughtryn shook the rain from his benjamin, and followed the butler into the low, square hall of the chief-district-magistrate. It was late and two lamps were lit. Mr. Magruder had not long begun dinner, and regretted that he must ask Mr. Oughtryn, if his business was any but the briefest, to return

later. To this Oughtryn, whose eyes seemed very sly and primed, demurred, placing his coat upon the slates and his hat and whip upon that, beside a chair of former Grecian lines, on which he took a slight seat. To the butler's enquiry whether he intended to await the conclusion of dinner, he made the shrill but steady rejoinder, "manifestly, with the notable's permission." He sat thus for an hour and a half, through the door on one side the quiet rain falling, and through the door at his left, the rattle of silver and harsh flow of voices. Whatever were his conjectures, as he glared round upon these chequered walls (the ornate frames, the tragic prints)—whether he was overburdened with a notion "money and sneers," or awed with a sense of the "notable fitness of things"—whether he was merely repolishing a keenish weapon for the encounter that was before him—there he sat, a primed and tested ancient, leaning forward with hands folded over knees; somewhat daunted, somewhat removed, and somewhat chary; yet a person decided and determined.

When presently four ladies pressed out in a flutter of laughter, the swim of their severe dresses drowning the rain, they gazed about each other's shoulders at the seated figure ("Mr. Oughtryn, the owner of the famous room"), and smiled as they mistook for inflated consequence his concerned and cabined air. Even when they had passed across into a further door, he was not immediately summoned into the dining-room, but had leisure to listen to the tinkling of a piano, and the low voice of a young lady who sang a somewhat puzzling song of a "deserted castle," and of Cupid being found unharmed among the ruins, to which Mr. Oughtryn, thinking of "fountains" and "effigies of the new-born young," observed "it was a mercy it was not broken too."

The ditty had just ceased, when two fiery young gentlemen crossed over arm in arm, whereon Oughtryn, being beckoned from the dining-room, detached himself from his chair, took up his small hat, his official whip for counsel, and groped, bowing somewhat blindly, out of the slated hall, into a pleasing aroma of sherry and flowers.

In the room, a tall, dark man with bold, weary eyes was leaning to the right of the mantel-piece, and throwing into the fire, piece by piece, some minute fragments of a document which he had evidently just torn in pieces. Magruder, who sat at the end of the table, seemed to endeavour to soften a determined expression to something more forbearing as Oughtryn entered. The latter advanced to the disarranged table, with fingers guarding lips, while the magistrate discussed the wherewithal of hides and casked mutton. Oughtryn gave his answers with an eye straining after the bland in secret concern, and, on his side, it was evident the magistrate was talking more haughtily than he wished. He cried "Ah, ah," and tossed his weighty head, as if he had seen the other's respectful concealments and would fain forget his own.

He now indicated some wine the butler had put on the bottom corner of the table, and a chair there against the wall beneath a pretty portrait of a young lady taken against the shrouds of a ship.

Strange beings, men ! Here they stood or sat in their discontent in the warm room. Here strove to accomplish their large ends beside the noisy fire. Are we sometimes too forgetful of the pleasant fends we have erected and the second moral effort it is possible to make behind them ? How much quicker would these men have surrendered their private determination, or resigned measures in another's behalf, had the roof been removed and the rain allowed to enter ?

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Oughtryn had conveyed the impression, as one who knew "next to nothing," but who had listened steadily and blankly to Sir William's bedside narrative, that something careful might be done, and as far as his cautious notions went, had better be attempted. He was sly and forlorn by turns. On his early-morning visit, he sat by the tent-bed, holding his small hat and whip across his knees, attired in the all-enveloping coat and jack-boots, accoutred to "remove the horses to pasture." He made very few interruptions, once widely explaining himself as "having no liking for such proceedings," and again putting it as "a dangerous thing to any one who was steady in his judgment." When, however, the whole story had been told him, and when Heans had sent him across to the cave to examine the cracks, and the sack-chain, and afterwards, at Oughtryn's request, turned up the one piece of backing he had—the writing in the *Plutarch*—spelling out the manuscript through his eyeglass—Oughtryn, though he could not admit there was much to go on, "doubted he could stand constant under another night of such conduct." Nor, when he was told of the afternoon's collision over Abelia's horse (and he had heard something of this), could he allow, without an attempt to stop it, "any fresh discommodiousness being worked upon yourself, honour." There, at first, he sat, he and Sir William, hemmed in and surrounded by spare furniture early brought in by himself and the woman, squeaking occasionally in a sort of high protesting, and more than once observing, as if to reassure the patient, that he was taking the soldier with the horses, as had been suggested by his Honour, the Deputy-Commissioner. And upon Sir William enquiring if they would be long away, he explained (as if Heans' accident had disarmed a wonted closeness) it would depend whether Leeworthy could take them, as he seemed overfull. If not, he was due two miles on at Gastine's—a name, as it happened, familiar to his questioner. It appeared both Leeworthy and Skipwith of Glen Allen were absent during yesterday's visit, and he had trudged on to Mr. Gastine's, who himself was under-shedded. He considered there was less danger in "fearing too much than too little," and he

would be wary of opening the matter to any officer to whom he might appeal, in a way which "couldn't be stood for." He added that to hearten himself, he would, before calling, find and question Conapanny, though he did not lean much on the backing of a native seen about at night. This last observation evidenced he was not far from crediting the terrible story Sir William had told him. As for his relations with Spafield, he had spoken with him early at the kitchen door, and his account of it had been "bad for yourself, honour, on account of impudent and petty tyrannising with him, and worse for the black that followed him—though I speaks to both being conspicuous held."

Heans gave as clear an account of his discoveries, and the events of yesterday, as his fever would permit; having so much sadness of dismay, in his excitement, to determine that through no lack of warning should danger chance upon Abelia if to-morrow he departed. Oughtryn, who, when approached on this point, was standing by the bed, having returned from the cave, glared blindly at the bed-clothes, and was as if he could not be made alarmed about his daughter. It was as if he dismissed the women to their own comprehension and defences. After hearing, however, of the afternoon's struggle with Spafield, he admitted, with a twinkle of falsetto obstinacy, "his poor chit might be graver questioned." It was plain he had already had some talk with her. He held his hat in his left hand, and the *Plutarch* open in the other, as if he had something given him to read he knew already by heart, and perceived, moreover, it was not pleasing to think upon. Indeed, as if, in his roughened fingers, he held a standard author of whom his sly and reverent mind, somewhat simply furnished (a mind not equipped for deciding), could find no excuse for approving. In a word, before him lay Sir William Heans, "his gentleman," the worse for a nasty, persistent collisioning with wise privilege (that wall he so feared), and he, an old-hand yet, was feeling prudently his humbler weapon, and scheming a grey campaign by which he might cut a "quietness" about him against the cautious principle by which he lived.

Heans—was it because he was leaving Hobarton?—chose to be reticent about the quarrel between the two gentlemen in his room. He informed Oughtryn there had been some disagreement between Captain Shaxton and Mr. Daunt on coming from the eventful ride, and that he considered Mr. Daunt had taken an unfair part, but he did not touch on the peculiar relation of both gentlemen to himself, nor did he lay undue emphasis on the facts that he had found Mr. Daunt seated there, and that he had reserved him the room. Perhaps he saw by the man's face he had no need to be more particular. To his concluding remarks, Oughtryn, after a short silence, caught his breath in a peculiar, harsh sigh. Then with the neighing and

somewhat cryptic observation that "crutches were cheap" (not including, it may be supposed, the remainder of the metaphor in deference to Sir William's presence), he snapped to the book, tapped a dark forehead with it, and presently put it in the pocket of his voluminous coat. Afterwards, with a short-sighted peep into the rainy yard, he drew from the same pocket a very crumpled handkerchief, and after carefully unfolding it, took from it his usual crumb of comfort in a small lump of tobacco, which he flipped somewhat forlornly into his mouth.

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"Come now, sir," said Magruder, when Oughtryn, having taken his wine, doubtfully smelt it, and drunk it at a draught, replaced the glass on the table, "what you have to say may be said before our friend Dr. Wardshaw. He and I cannot, I fear, yet part. Let me try to satisfy you better than I am satisfying him. Now, now, Mr. Oughtryn, I thought all was sugar and ale with you?"

"Mr. Oughtryn," said the dark man, glinting a dark look over the table and smiling too, "you must put up with me. Mr. Magruder has his teeth in my wrist and I can't get away till he lets go." He pitched a pellet of paper on the fire still smiling, and when Oughtryn had somewhat blankly dropped his eyes, and traced the patterns in the carpet with the tip of his whip, he admitted huskily that "presences of persons like Dr. Wardshaw was a convenience even in private," and to Mr. Magruder's request to "Come, now," lifted a blanched face, and shrilly told what he had found the night before on returning to his yard, his pass-man's explanation of the affray, also of the writing in the book which had led the prisoner to watch the soldier, and of the soldier's "supernatious conduct" of which his daughter and servant had been witnesses.

To this Mr. Magruder, flipping the nutshells in his plate as though they were so many human nuts whose tone he was testing, replied with the question: "I know you, Oughtryn, have not come carrying to me the assertions of the one party. What had the file, himself, to say?"

Oughtryn opened his many buttoned coat, and rising, drew from it Sir William's green-leather book, which conducting along the table, he lengthily and laboriously opened at a candle, and lowered gropingly towards the magistrate's chin. Magruder now put on a pair of immense spectacles, and arresting the book, lent back and examined it by the candelabra. He was occupied thus a considerable time, Oughtryn, whip in hand, staring at him, with a sort of grave hope. At length he put it down, and after musing a while at the empty table, "begged his friend, Dr. Wardshaw, to do them the favour to examine the writing." This the doctor did, clutching up the book and retiring with it to the chimney. Magruder then asked Oughtryn to return to his chair, and when he had again seated himself, primed, obstinate, and

somewhat fearful, repeated his question. Oughtryn told him word for word what he had told Sir William Heans.

The doctor made a sudden irreconcilable noise like the echo of a sardonic laugh, and Magruder, painstakingly removing his glasses and frowning up, enquired if Oughtryn could say "if the young girl seemed to encourage the attentions of the soldier?"

"For a female so obscure-minded," said Oughtryn, brushing his hat across his cautious eyes as if he would brush away some puzzle, "she had spoken with him unusual steady. The man is treated obedient by us all." He did not know what her reason was, if it was more than chit's goodness. She was good, if of a domestic leaning. It was his notion she was hiding fright, and he had not interfered with her because he knew she thought the man the same that had spoken bad over the wall. It was singular for her to be so easy.

"You don't mean she was froward?" asked the magistrate.

"There is nothing showy about my female," said Oughtryn in explanation: "the child is frightful by nature and obscure by disposition."

Said Magruder, tapping stern glasses and staring over them at Oughtryn: "And what does the old native say? Could she be made to speak? What enlightenment is there in her account of her movements?"

Oughtryn hung his head. "Putting aside hasty speaking," he said, "we have not yet found the woman. She seems to have gone off. Conapanny has her runs in the bush. She has not yet been come on."

Magruder turned to the doctor, remarking acidly: "I hardly expect you to agree, sir; but I cherished a respect for the old native."

"Ho," said the doctor, "you drop there, do you?"

The magistrate raised his hand, waving it ironically. He sat for a while with head down. "And did you yourself mention," he said at last, addressing Oughtryn, "did you mention to the prisoner yourself the superstition against the house, and that Governor Collins had died there?"

"Honour, my gentleman had heard the guard himself speak of it."

"You petition to have the appointment altered on this?"

"I—I fetches a warning-like to you, gentlemen, and asks you to quarter us less troublesome and threatening."

"You make no accusation?"

"No, I can't, honour." (Did Mr. Oughtryn sharply breathe?)

"But I fetches the danger." He rose suddenly, with whip and hat clutched to him, and hand outstretched, his eyes blind in the candles. "And I asks help."

"What danger? Be specific."

"The danger that's attacked my gentleman."

"Nothing more serious than the fracas?" The magistrate looked heavily, narrowly, and enquiring into his eyes.

"Well, honour, I put in a word for my young person having her name let be."

Magruder fumbled at his white cravat and put a yet more remarkable question.

"Sit down, sir. Calm yourself. Your prisoner is a gentleman, is he? Come—come, I should like to know what in your opinion a gentleman is, Oughtryn?"

"I can't rightly put it, sir," said Oughtryn, sinking slowly to his chair again, "unless—putting aside notableness—it's him that cheats less than he could—including of his mortal life?"

Both the gentlemen gazed at him whimsically.

"Why, sir, you have so much faith in man!" marvelled the magistrate, showing his fine teeth a little over his corporation. "I expect less and demand more myself. It is my business. Well, well" (growing colder), "so Sir William Heans has left you so much! He has, however, a singular twist for investigating other people's crimes! I am in somewhat of a quandary. I hardly wish to grant him the credit for an invention so grim, nor do I willingly give it him for a blackguard attempt to revenge himself for a blow, or get the man, with whose familiarity with your daughter he was chagrined, into trouble . . . I repeat, with a caution" (as Oughtryn rose and sat down again), "I hardly care to entertain these thoughts. . . . I declare to you privately, if your pass-servant were to bring to me that document he says he found in the cave, and which has disappeared so fortuitously, I would get him his conditional pardon."

Magruder here stooped forward in his chair, and emphasized what he had to say with a knife, on which he kept his eyes. He seemed to wait upon Oughtryn, but Oughtryn added nothing. He then pushed back his chair and sat for a while with his hand over his forehead. His stern mouth alone showed beneath. Dr. Wardshaw tossed the green book, turning once to examine his be-satined chin in the glass, on the results of which examination he seemed profoundly ironic. Over the table, behind the steady candles, Oughtryn held a stiff forefinger across his lips and peered sly and sharp about the walls, as though amid a heavy oppression of "money and sneers" he were clinging unvanquished among the "notable fitnesses" of his belief.

"Is the red-coat of large build?" asked Magruder, sweeping his hand suddenly from his forehead, and crossing his comfortable white trousers.

"A tall man, honour," answered Oughtryn, "tough by nature, and given to frisky speaking. A deep hand."

"I suppose," said the magistrate, sharply, "Sir William Heans has come to consider your daughter to some extent under his protection?"

"My prisoner was pleased to show me he was anxious about my young person—being of a withdrawing nature."

"Is it not an old story," said the other, patting his knee, "and the fault with the young girls? They are rather fickle sometimes: some one or other assuming a proprietorship over the young woman which both she and her new gallant resent?"

"The young person being shrinkable?" questioned Oughtryn, staring up past the other, as if he sought some blank and uncomfortable solution in the portrait on the wall behind.

The doctor made his peculiar noise, and spoke. "The young girl is nearly blind, Mr. Magistrate," cried he. "I take another side. I suppose Heans was trying to protect her against the man and her own innocence."

"You make the file out to be bad, sir—an intruder on the peace of this family?"

"I have attended this girl," said Wardshaw, indifferent enough—and holding tenaciously as a watch-dog to his private tragedy. "She is a gentle, shrinking creature. That sort of philandering on her part—and with such a brutish lout—is exceedingly improbable."

"Dear me," said the magistrate, somewhat fallen of face, "this is very curious. You believe, then, it might be a sincere state of fright in Heans?"

"I take that point of view," said Wardshaw. "I add an idle suggestion that the old gambler speaks the truth—that is, so far as the file has made a set at him about the girl. The other thing may be his frantic style—sheer panic in a moment of danger with the lout at him. As for the soldier—it is as Oughtryn says—he has a bad way or a bad mouth."

"What is this you say about the rest of it?"

"I said fright," said the doctor, with irritable decision, lifting the book and staring indifferently at its old square back and gilded traceries; "but I leave it to the Court and his wider experience of human character."

"Oh you do, do you!" said Magruder, shruggingly. "In the end many do, Wardshaw! Indeed they do! And you, Mr. Oughtryn—is it fair to beg of you your private opinion of Sir William Heans' discoveries and losses?"

Oughtryn dropped his eyes over that cautious finger, and seemed to trace a troubled sketch with his whip upon the white carpet. His cheek twice moved as though he was chewing unconsciously on a figurative crumb of comfort. Eventually he said: "It's fell out very foul for my servant. I do not like it, honour;" and glared up again at the portrait above the magistrate, as one might look out, watchful and humble armed, across a battlement.

"Well, now, listen to me," said old Magruder, with a fell and final air; "you guarantee your story of the file's knowledge of the house and superstition. I think, with that in hand, and

the book, you and your prisoner would strain a very weak chain. That is all. What more is there in evidence beside the ingenuity of the idea, and perhaps a peep of daylight seen at the top of a crack in your stable? A bad exaggeration—such as that about the hat—might get the prisoner into trouble—if it was such. What is to be done? I cannot take it on this. At the worst the quarter is only in authority over you for a few hours—three days, you say. If there is any danger for your daughter—anything in Sir William Heans' fears but mere jealous or superannuated interference—can she not avoid the man? The same with the prisoner. Let him behave carefully Sunday, and should the man go out of his way to approach your daughter, come to me (with clear evidence) and I will try and free her of her indiscretion. I remind you, Heans' reputation in connection with the ladies is not successful. Should the prisoner, after a few days' reflection—with indignation cooled—stick to his extraordinary story of the ancient hat and writing, still make a body-hunt out of a night's ratting, still wish his evidence tested of the connection between Spafeld and the "Spars" of this scrawl, I will listen to him—I will look into it. I repeat—if he still wish it. If not, I will not pursue it. I remark, I don't know who has appointed this file. You remember your prisoner has not been a contented man. The police know more about him than I, or perhaps you do. Who is to say the officers responsible have not put a truculent fellow in a shaking mire—where a mild man would not serve two purposes! You request me to exert my authority to have the man removed. I say to you, Put up with the quarter for three days, or come to me with a piece of rough behaviour unprovoked. Meanwhile the pass-man has been once hurt. I know the prisoner's physique; it is not a heavy one. You may tell the guard, if there is any more rough-handling of the prisoner, I shall not interpret it favourably to him or those to whose carelessness his appointment is due."

Magruder had not quite finished what he had to say.

"Now mind, sir," he added, "do not be too loose with your signature while the file is about. Keep Heans in at night. You can be too free with your pass-man!"

He then bowed and wished Mr. Oughtryn and His Excellency better weather for the morrow. Oughtryn rose. Sardonic Dr. Wardshaw swung from the mantel-piece, and with Magruder's consent, carried the *Plutarch* and put it in the old fellow's hand. As he did so, he said half-comfortably, "Commend me to little Miss; you have all got what you want, haven't you?" Oughtryn, while putting the book away in his coat, seemed to reply that, "it was a kittle fit," and when he had buttoned up, and gone to the door, he turned and thanked "honours, for steady standing to it." He then groped his way out, his face, if passive, rather staid than free.

So he left the motionless gentlemen, and emerged into the

hall, where the piano was playing to an accompaniment of warm spring rain.

(3) THE TRUMPET

Towards evening, Sir William rose, dressed, and went into the sitting-room. He felt pretty well, and tramped the floor, testing his ability to perform the long coach journey. His head, bound in a green handkerchief, he found painful, but steady; and was soon confident that, with a good night, it would serve him. He rose about half-past five. The rain had then stopped and he felt more hopeful about the weather. The silver-lead sky had given way over the hills to a cloth-of-gold cavern. A perpetual noise of steps was in the damp garden, and persons were tramping up and down about the fountain; a sharp melodious "toot" floating out incessantly as they passed the gate. Sir William Heans thought of many things as they went among the clear bushes; how little these merry people made of the groaning old gate; how the grandeur or the sternness that had been was probably part of the amusement—part of the pleasant clamour that came along the passages.

In passing, he has a note remarking how beautiful that night was poor Abelia's red valerian—Bloody Warrior as it is playfully called. On all sides, under the shadows of the motionless bushes, the wet grass was coloured with an old stain of blood. Yes, it was as if the day's rain had washed out of the garden a forgotten discoloration to suit the grim old stones and paths—as the sick ruffian, Spafield, was frightened he might do on the boards of the great room.

Heans had heard the horses leave the yard in the morning, but since then had not seen Oughtryn. He could not detect the red-coat's gabble under the clap of hoofs, but supposed he had departed with it. The man was either subdued or keeping quiet. He had seen the woman, but had not spoken with her. But for a slight outweariedness she was her monumental self. He had some recollection of having seen her face in the night, and from the fact that she expressed no surprise nor barely enquired of his condition, he judged that she had aided Oughtryn in attending him. Abelia he had not seen, nor for a while heard her voice amid the noises of preparation. This was not extraordinary in the quiet girl, but he would have been glad to be made certain in what condition the collision with the villain, and Oughtryn's communications, had left her mind. He was startled by her voice about half-past four.

The occurrence was not quieting. She spoke in the yard, not far from his window, and in a low, clear tremble. He heard her plainly say, "I did not speak to you."

And then a voice he hardly recognised: "Come now, Shy, I thought you called to me!"

"No."

"Well, you looked at me—I thought you wished a word with me."

"No, soldier—I was just——"

"Just what?"

"Just thinking you were——"

"What was I?"

"Just thinking you were sharp enough."

"Pretty sharp—why now? But you never seen me sharp—only kind!"

"Something—something tells me, soldier, you're very sharp."

"Why, miss, you're looking calm as shivering ice at me!"

Sir William rose, flung on his gown, and stood holding by the window. But there was nothing more said. Abelias, perhaps, had turned and gone in. He heard steps move a short distance away and there stop. Leaning forward over his toilette, he saw the vile figure of Spafeld, quite close, somewhat turned from the wall. He was drawing a cane across his trousers, the back of his red coat bowed and sulky, the cheek beneath the shako a curious chalky livid. He could not see if Abelias was still there. He pictured her against the wall, shivering and white. In a few moments two men in livery appeared before the stable, and Spafeld strolled over, accosting them with folded arms. Heans could not get the picture of her out of his mind all the while he was dressing.

The house was full of a subdued bustle up to a late hour. The woman, as we have said, had little to say, and while the supper-table was undergoing its brief period of array, Sir William sat reading and thinking, and did not intrude upon that monumental silence. He recollected, while she was there, the half-warning, half-entreaty she had made him just previous to his visit to the stable, and though he could not say what point of view she took, he felt his promise to refrain from collision had been broken, and this silence seemed to admit. He said, however, as she was about to mingle with the footsteps and alarm without, that he regretted the anxiety caused last night; it was unavoidable. And whatever she had been told, he begged them to be "shy of all intercourse with the man while he remained." As for her, she stopped in her slow way, and with the door-handle in her hand, and her proud eyes regarding it, "he should have no fear for them two women," she said. "Miss and she had got a real fright of the officer."

He thought that the tone of her voice again insisted that the fear was not for them, but he sat quiet and said no more, and she seemed little more willing, plucking open the door and seeming, in a sort of haste, to stumble out.

Oughtryn knocked and edged into the door as he was seated

before the table. Somewhat blank and secret, he announced, "there was no news of Conapanny, nor did he know where to look for her"; adding "that there was no throwing out the blood-crow either, but honours had ordered him, through Oughtryn, to mind his *p's*, and this he had told him." Sir William, dressed with much neatness and seated for this last evening behind his table curiosities, asked a few questions from a brave eyeglass, and was answered careful, high, and breathless from about the door. "He answers me respectful with his arms locked," said Oughtryn, referring to his words with Spafield, "but he has the look of a marked man; and supernatious in his head again"; he added, "for he tells me the help women have been playing at him, for that he found a candle lit in his bedroom when he went up to-night." He seemed to add this communication rather as a sort of heartener, and significant point, than a singular thing for Heans' inspection. In any case silence ensued upon it. On this Sir William broke at last (he was sitting back, and he let his glass fall out upon his velvet waistcoat)—broke at last to "suppose that it had been necessary to ride on as far as Gastine's?" and was replied to with a nod.

Oughtryn, having agreed to send in his "chit" during the evening for a few cautioning remarks, withdrew his head, then slowly pushing in again, he placed the green *Plutarch* on the edge of the table. He had again turned aside when Heans asked if he would take a toast. To this he agreed, Sir William filling a wine-glass and an ancient rum sneaker from the decanter. Elevating the glass with a stern air, Heans proposed "long life to himself and peace in his house"; to which Oughtryn replied with "a roof, honour, and a good end." He then went away, and Sir William's chin fell upon his cravat.

Yes, Sir William stood by the window, watching the gold pale out of the north, or sat by the fire listening and thinking of the strange things happening and about to happen. He thought of the fellow who had struck him down. It looked a long way over those hills, and the effort was a grave one. And this was grave, and thronging oppressively, this, out of which he was stepping, and armed with vague and arresting talons. The lights in the garden, the low voices, the uncertain under-roll above and below stairs, the sharp trumpeting of the gate (there were times when he unconsciously connected the noise with the call of the little statue on the fountain), these, and the thought of the dangerous fellow about the house, who, if his power had been curbed, had come out of it with hands quite free, were harassed moorings from which to loose a course upon "a tide which had no turn." He was glad and relieved when Oughtryn shut his shutters, and he was barred for the night in the mild and prosaic company of the Roman soldier, his dove-women, of which he used to say they did him good, for they cast continually into a worldly mind the images of good women, his friend—the empalaced bird, the

steady, little, feminine clock so overweighted with ornament, and those other curious things which had been his companions.

When the woman had drawn the shades and removed the supper, Sir William's thoughts took a dangerous turn, and he looked about him for that world we call "a book." There was the *Plutarch* lying on the angled patterns of the cloth. He rose and took the leather volume, examining the green and brown marbling and the gold-lined sides, and reading a portion here and there. Eventually he returned with it to his bead chair, and elevating it, with his sharpened features towards the lamp, tried with painful precision to follow the lines of print.

But this failed to divert him :—

"It is said that when Lycurgus the orator had delivered Xenocrates the philosopher out of the hands of the tax-gatherers, who were hurrying him to prison for the tax paid by strangers, and had prosecuted them for their insolence, Xenocrates afterwards meeting the children of Lycurgus, said to them, 'Children, I have made a noble return to your father for the service he did me; for all the world praise him for it.'"

And this made him sad :—

"Many persons of rank made their court to Alcibiades; but it is evident that they were charmed and attracted by the beauty of his person. Socrates was the only one whose regards were fixed upon the mind, and bore witness to the young man's virtue and ingenuity, the rays of which he could distinguish through his fine form: and fearing lest the pride of riches and high rank, and the crowd of flatterers, both Athenian and strangers, should corrupt him, he used his best endeavours to prevent it, and took care that so hopeful a plant should not lose its fruit and perish in the very flower. If ever Fortune so enclosed and fortified a man with what are called her goods, as to render him inaccessible to the incision knife of philosophy, and the searching-probe of free advice, surely it was Alcibiades."

While this unsteadied his mind :—

"After this glorious success, Alcibiades, ambitious to show himself as soon as possible to Tissaphernes, prepared presents and other proper acknowledgments for his friendship and hospitality, and then went to wait upon him with a princely train. But he was not welcomed in the manner he expected: for Tissaphernes, who for some time had been accused by the Lacedæmonians, and was apprehensive that the charge might reach the King's ear, thought the coming of Alcibiades a very seasonable incident, and therefore put him under arrest, and confined him at Sardis, imagining that the injurious proceeding would be a means to clear himself."

Even though it was followed by this most hopeful passage :—

"Thirty days after, Alcibiades, having by some means or other obtained a horse, escaped from his keepers, and fled to Clazomenæ."

He discarded the book thereafter for last week's *Courier*. And the *Courier* for his "poniard," his old weapon of defence, which he unbuttoned from the breast of his clawhammer, and fell to sharpening with his pen-knife. Was this Sir William Heans at this work? How strange he looks! He says himself he felt a "hard feeling of regret." While so engaged he changed his mind concerning the "mitred figure" upon the handle. He observes a likeness in it to the cocked hat and uniform—and even the narrow face—of the carving in the stable of the ill-fated Governor Collins.

Perhaps the fancy was father to the discovery, and he was too ready to think he had fallen upon the "dagger-knife" fashioned by Walter Surridge.

At seven the house had quieted, and a little later, there came a groping knock at the door, and Abelia felt her way in. Heans backed the bead chair about and half-faced her as she stood by the table. She had in her hand some Wandering Jew, which perhaps she had brought to put in one of her singular vases—one of which, pleasingly mispainted with a bird-cage, was on the table. However, she laid them instead upon the cloth and tried to blink between Sir William and the fire. Grey dress and black apron, brooch and tatted collar. Flat hair—face a trace fallen, as one not easy where she gropes—and the inevitable, pale, fluttering calm. A singular, trembling, precise hand that twists back and forth upon the greenery.

Sir William remarked: "Is that you, Abelia?" and tapping his knee with his book, and speaking rather irritably, he said he was sorry that, after her father's trouble, a bad man was to remain for some days about her home, with special facilities for intrusion. "He wished again to warn her against speaking with him. He begged to know," and a sort of wheedling laugh crept into his voice, "if she thought she could give him a promise not, of her free will, to speak with him again?"

The girl shrank against the table and gave the required answer. "She promised, if she could prevent it, not again to speak to the soldier. She said she trusted she might never speak with him."

"Ah," said Sir William, "there's no relying on such chance acquaintances, my dear. Lord help us, it's a strange world! No, not in any one. Here to-day, Abelia, and gone to-morrow. No trusting, my child—no trusting, miss."

"It was not that I was confiding," she said, pale as death and peaceful.

"Well, what was it?" He spoke hoarse.

"It was, we had better be respectful."

"That is wise, that is the way your father speaks. But take care that him you prove does not prove something unforgettable. . . . By Heaven, my head is passably painful—there, that's well! So you promise me this. Yes? That's a great relief.

And I, as your old friend, I wish to kiss your hand, miss, in good-night."

He half rose from his chair, took her hand, and kissed it, and sank back, staring at the fire.

She stood aside, her eyelids wildly fluttering upon her calm face, and as if they were dragged from her, came the words: "Sir, why is your voice, sir, so heroical sad?"

He did not answer. He sat before the fire, his plaid legs crossed, his chin propped upon the old book.

Abelia pushed slowly to the door, and again stopped while she felt for the handle, her face white and sour-calm.

"Come, miss," he said, without moving, "are you still there? Abelia, the house is quiet at last. Won't you go and play to me your *Robin Adair*?"

She gropingly pulled open the door and went out. Sir William Heans sat there, and did not move, till he heard the faint tinkle and tang of the piano, when he rose and re-opened it. He stood behind the door and listened. She must have left the stair-door open, for the tune crept in from the hall with unwonted distinctness. It seemed to float away into empty rooms and wander out, falling on little firm cadences, and rising on little scales of seemly and half-shy joyance, taking to air so prudently, alighting to earth so soft and gropingly, like the savour of such a quiet week of a contented life—such provident gaieties and sadness—as should have been lived in such a place. It aspired, it touched and skimmed those old ceilings, it fell a-fingering the air—and sprang peeping at the gentle stars. "Tang-tang-tinkle-tang." On she played steadily and pretty well. The old house hung about that distant fingering.

Sir William stood by the door, beating time with his book, and making at last a sort of humming. Indeed, what was there sad in the child's playing! Behind him, his friend the bird gave evidences of strange feeling—we hesitate to call it alarm—clambering with a great caution up the minaret. And suddenly, in the midst of a pretty flight, the piano ceased. In the hush there was born in some corner of the house a slow and husky singing:

Murruda, yerrabá, tundy kin ara,
Murruda, yerrabá, min yin guiny wite má lá.

CHAPTER XIX

WILD WORK

Well, God's above all ; and there be souls must be saved,
And there be souls must not be saved.

—*Othello.*

BEYOND the break in Abelia's music, and an occasional bleating above-stairs, the night passed without disturbance. Once only, in the small hours, he thought he heard a loud and 'prolonged fit of drunken weeping.

He awoke much refreshed. It was a pleasant day, with a veiled sun, and the hot air upon the damp hills. Sir William dressed about seven and stood for a while in the doorway into the yard. Though it was warm, he wore an old black cloak as though not yet recovered from his vile attack. There was a strong odour of Spring grass. The kitchen door was open, and there was movement within ; but the stable was still closed. He had fixed his intention, of walking over to the cave while it was still empty, of entering, and bringing back Abelia's saddle, his own, and their appointments (these being his especial charge), and placing them as if for security among the furniture in his bedroom. It was then his purpose to watch for a moment when yard and stables were empty, and pass quickly along across the windows to the gate : his saddle held about his waist under the cloak. Though this would mean a longer distance to be traversed under the eye of any one at the back windows, he preferred the risk to that of deliberately removing the saddle before strangers in the stable, or an interruption from Spafield, who might see him go in. Should he, by some accident, return from Gastine's, who would have time in the house to miss the saddle?

And so the hazardous trial had come. In a few minutes he stepped slowly across in cap and cloak. The vapours shrouded the hills and the soft sun beamed more warmly. There was a smell of cooking among the Spring odours, and he heard the woman's footsteps on her flags. Oughtryn he had left at the front shutters, and he trusted he might not have to explain his

behaviour. The door was locked. He opened it and felt his way through the empty stable. The curtain was again withdrawn from Abelia's saddle, and his hand, seeking the pommel, came in contact with the man's moccasins, which were hanging from it. The skin was sodden and wet. He threw the loathsome foot-gear to the earth, and lifted the heavy saddle to his shoulder. On the pommels he hung the two bridles by their bits and reins. His own light saddle he essayed to take upon his right arm, but finding it over much for one journey, he carried it through cave and stable, and out a few yards before the door, where, dropping it on the stones, he made his return without it. He did not see that he was observed, though he again heard the woman in her kitchen. He took a breath or two in his bedroom, and then went out. He thought he would have brought the other saddle in without encounter, but as he returned with it somewhat conspicuous upon his shoulder, and was within twenty feet of the passage, there was a smell of tobacco, and Spafeld himself came round the corner of the house, a morning pipe in his mouth. A civil smile was on his face, and he dropped his eyes and swiftly touched his shako. In the glimpse he caught of the miscreant, he thought him much changed—changed as it were in nature; his face had a plodding weakened look—a bad old man's air. Sir William passed him with head averted. In the room, with the saddle down, and himself resting upon the bed, he had an instant's disheartened qualm that the ruffian had been watching him—even had a prompting why he had removed the saddle. But he relieved himself much by the thought that had he been suspicious about its destination he would of course not have shown himself. He would have remained hidden.

Yet the half-civil look upon the wicked face; the lurking smile; the pointed glance upon the saddle; knocked ever and anon on the door of his mind during the morning hours. Supposing Spafeld was on watch upon him, and entertained any suspicion of the saddle's being used, what reason could he have for showing himself? Little enough. Yet there were two. He might be conveying a benignant warning; or he might, with some secret motive, wish to frighten him back into his bounds.

Heans' mood was excited. He naturally remembered the man's strange attempts to cross him, and how they had been thwarted. He could not forget his attempts to make a sinister impression on him. If attachment to Abelia was the sole cause of his enmity, of course, he would be glad to let him go—to get rid of him on any count.

Well, he did not, as we shall see, allow himself to be thrust from his enterprise by a prompting which, in spite of an insistent knocking at his mind, was too much the idle impression of suspense.

From the sitting-room window he watched the same beaver-bonneted maids come up about the fountain—how full of

lively importance! and ten minutes after, a loitering boy, with a basket and a handful of stones. Close behind the urchin toddled an old fellow with a hoary chin and a carpenter's bag, his eyes impressed with the occasion, his lips muttering all the way up. He seemed to be saying: "Governor Franklin, his Honour, Governor Franklin!" The baleful watcher remembered to smile as two young ladies appeared, one of whom kimboed her arms and swung a lightsome turn about the basin.

Soon after the woman brought in the piles of rancid bacon and calcined eggs, and he announced that he would perhaps be absent from his lunch, requesting that it might not be left for him after two o'clock. The woman bowed and went out.

About half-past nine he heard the rumbling of a vehicle and two gentlemen came up from the gate, one young and tall, the other stout, with an auburn wig. A little behind them, Mr. Daunt hurried in, rather sharp and fussy. He wore a long blue coat, and was followed by a couple of prisoners in grey carrying hoes and rakes, to whom he gave brief orders. The men touched their black straws and immediately began hoeing. Daunt came quickly up through the warm veiled garden. He seemed too absorbed in his last touches—for a ruined man; too much of a piece with the human gaiety of that morning—for a settler of strange dooms. Despite his bustling way, Sir William flashed away from the curtain with glaring eyes, and stood trembling over the fire.

And Matilda Shaxton would speak in these old rooms to-night!

* * * * *

At half-past ten, in his bedroom, Sir William dressed himself with his usual care and put on his hat. This done, he tightly bound up his bridle with cord, and buttoned it into the breast pocket of his clawhammer. In a small high-pocket of his waistcoat he put his "poniard," thrusting the blade down through the lining. He then brushed and donned the somewhat rusty cloak—a long garment with a cape reaching nearly to his ankles; and, when he had for some time listened, and observed the state of the yard through his window, he hauled up the light saddle under his arms, and attached it by the girths and a stirrup about his waist. Then, buttoning the three top buttons of his outer garment, he took his cane, and with his left hand supporting the saddle back, he walked quickly through the passage to the door. Ever since he had been in his bedroom, the stable had been empty of life and, as far as he could discern, of sound. The yard he now also believed empty, and when he came out he found it so. Without pausing an instant, he walked along nearish to the kitchen windows; then across the half-open door (with its clattering china) and, when level with the sewing-room, struck outwards for the gate. He became aware, with some discomposure, that the hall-door was open; but a side-

glance, as he passed, showed it empty, unless were included two gentlemen leaning and jesting by the entrance. He was conscious of a pleasing bustle, and of several people, behind the curtains in the bright Chamber. As he tapped his way across, his eye was suddenly tugged upwards and he was much disturbed by a gleam of scarlet in the open window next but one to that over the hall. He was more relieved to see that it was the soldier's coat and bayonet only, that were lying on the sill. Now, in a few leisurely steps, he had levered up the heavy latch and swung in the gate. Next instant he had passed out, and the gate had lipped its latch. Every step he took he expected to hear the heavy fluting gabble or that loathsome song follow him along the yard; but there was no alarm. The house was resonant with the pleasant movement and gossip of preparation, till he had levered up the latch, pressed through, and "shut it away for ever."

It was his plan, in case he should meet Daunt, or some one else, down about the front, to go up the lane to Davey, rather than down to Macquarie Street; and he started quietly past the caves and up the hill. There was no one in the lane. Had he decided to descend into Macquarie Street, he might have passed down across the Rivulet, and by forest track, joined his road outside the town; but, burdened as he was, he turned from an arduous climb, while, if he had come on a constable off the road with the saddle, the moment would be decisive. He chose, therefore, the risks of street and Boundary, trusting to his known proclivity and employment. Thus, striding leisurely, and twice or thrice turning his glass down the empty lane, he swung his way to the corner.

His method of carrying the concealed saddle proving much less trying than he expected—indeed quite comfortable—he even debated, as he threaded the street, whether he would remove it at that place to his arm, though that had been his plan. A few yards from the corner, he unfastened it, slipping it out upon his left arm as he came about, this being the last place where the change might be made without remark, and fearing some accident to a thing so hidden between here and Boundary.

He found himself quite alone in this part of Davey Street, though in the dim distance, at the bottom, there were a cart and a few pedestrians. The dwellings, here and there, had no life. The sight and smell of the mountain sea refreshed him. In one spot, no bigger than a crown, the sun was moving on the water like leaves in the moon. In his anxiety, he found himself questioning if there was enough wind for "poor faithful Stiff," but cast away the doubt. It was wise to be at one's calmest. He struck up a whistling, but soon stifled it, considering it safer to save his breath. The road descended slowly. He began to feel overhot in the cape, but knew he would need it before night. About half the distance down, he began to notice people

both behind and before him. A baker's boy approached him, and then an old woman, both of whom stared more than was comforting at his saddle. A glance behind showed him several people: most of them of the other sex. There was a stout man in a faded fustian jacket, carrying something on his head; in the road, a cart drawn by a donkey; while, as he looked, from out a lane, came a gentleman riding a rather fresh horse. On he went, very much lighter in mind, down the steepening slope. It was his intention, at the bottom of Davey Street, to follow the road past the cemetery and jetties till it swung northward.

Before he had reached the bottom, however, in a fit of annoyance, he elected to slightly change his way. A glance now and then behind showed him that, while the donkey-cart had turned off, its place was taken by two vehicles—a fly and a gig—while the gentleman upon the horse was still there, and kept rather annoyingly caracoling his company, making him feel the irksomeness of his observation. Another glance three minutes later, after that the hearing of his ears, told him that the gentleman was not far behind, and the fact that he did not trot on his way, but kept his nag angrily on the rein, and at the passade, plagued Sir William sufficiently to incline him to turn out of the rider's and his own road down a lane to the left. This he did, presently arriving with a sense of annoyance, yet of great relief, into the more frequented Macquarie Street.

On his progress here, Heans, being somewhat afraid of curiosity, quickened his pace and stepped sharply along towards the sea. He passed a fair sprinkling of pedestrians, but no one observed him with marked interest. But for the fact that the saddle was now a troublesome burden, and for the effort he must make to appear unconscious of it, he was buoyed up by a feeling of coming triumph, while below him, on his left, not three lanes off, was the turning of his goal. Keeping his glance away from every face, he crossed quietly over to the left-hand pavement. Though the covered sun was warm, the pavement was still damp.

He noted that several gentlemen had discarded broadcloth and tall head-gear for kerseymere and Manillas. At this moment, as he was about to pass over the top of the last lane—his being next—he turned to take a farewell glance up Macquarie Street, staring at the swimming mountain and striving to pick out the Hospital pediments. He at once saw, behind, the same top-hatted gentleman on the restive horse caracole out of the lane next below the one he had just taken. With a renewed sense of annoyance, he flashed about and hurried on. On the other side of the crossing, it occurred to him that he would more certainly keep to himself and company by turning down this lane, coming into his road below by Governor Collins' Street. This he immediately did, slackening his pace a little, and taking his way more leisurely along.

A little way down, there was a tailor's window, somewhat attractively set out in the winter's coats and *surtouts*. Among the latter there was a long, grey garment, which attracted Sir William's attention. He stopped, went back, and gave it some examination through his eyeglass. At the same moment, happening to glance back, he could see along past the buildings on the left that accursed figure in the top-hat and frock. He was pulled up at the crossing and was in conversation with an old game and fish seller at the kerb. Heans, whose temper was somewhat heated by his walk and this coincidence, gave the rider two minutes to proceed, and waited by the window till he should pass from vision. Two—three minutes went by, yet the fellow would not cease his interminable gossiping. The older man had left his stand and was soothing the restive horse, and clutching at his knees. Sir William turned and began to move past the shop, when he was struck by a wish to outstay the rider; so returning, he went up into the tailor's room. He expressed a desire to examine the *surtout*. The tailor, an old man of some manner, yet with a straying eye to Heans' cloak, fetched the *surtout* from the window and displayed it before him. Heans, relinquishing his saddle, and leaning back upon his cane, examined it and several others with discrimination and even with detail. He assumed, with business acumen, that the approaching summer had reduced them somewhat in price, but was assured (with much sadness of humour) that such wear had no time or fashion, and the moth only would remake the pendant—to which Heans smiled, and at last selecting a plain garment, and requesting the tailor to expect the price in the following week, returned slowly into the street.

When presently he glanced back, the rider with the tall hat and black coat had vanished along Macquarie Street, and he went on, well rid, he felt, of an idle follower. He made slow and quiet progress to the corner, and then with his saddle awkwardly upon his right arm, and his cane in his glove, came sharply about: the Ferry road once more in vision. He passed several people, and the face of one which he saw advancing right on him gave him a heavy pang. It was that of the small police-sergeant who a year ago had ushered him into the waiting-room of Franklin's audience-chamber: the man like a half-drawn knife. He was in smart cords and clawhammer and eyed him and his saddle with just a ghost of steely interest. He passed, however, without stopping him, and Sir William, on his part, threw him from his vision with a remarkable calm. Near the end of the street, he passed also, very down on his luck, a fellow with whom he had played at Fraser's: a man who was remarkable for staring at each of the company in turn, and for long intervals, and saying never a word. He was aware that this gentleman stopped and stared after him disturbingly.

At the end, he crossed over the street, and was in the Ferry

road. Looking south, he saw several vehicles and horsemen, and directly below him, before an inn, a tilted cart with bullocks and a trio of sailor-jacketed stockmen. About the cart, as he looked, came the troublesome fellow on the restive horse. Heans stood there for a moment and stared steadily at this rider. He was a handsome man, with quite a Byronical air, a fine thin face, and prettily groomed whiskers. He came nobly and abstractedly along the road. He seemed younger than Sir William had supposed : not more than thirty to thirty-five years. Sir William did not think that he was particularly observed by him ; nevertheless, he turned away with an unquiet heart-beat. A few yards on along the footpath was Six's curio shop, and before he quite knew what he had done, he was standing before it, and looking at the prints and pieces of brass and copper. He there endeavoured to win back his calm of mind. Immediately, over the white glass behind, he saw Henry Six himself, his head a little bowed, and the newspaper in his hand. For a flash Heans hesitated, but decided to wait again till the rider had passed by.

He waited five—six minutes. A horse with a vehicle passed down, but no hoofs passed up. He waited another three, four, five. Six continued to read his paper. No horseman went by. He now stole a glance southward. He immediately felt a sense of relief, for he could not see his sheep-like follower among the stockmen or by the wagon, and believed he had gone at last by his right-hand turning. He was mistaken, however, for on turning to look behind him, he recognised not the rider, but not far down his fine roan, held by a tout before a warehouse. Here were Six's brass and copper baubles, here was poor Six sunk in his paper, and yonder was the horse, now singularly familiar even to its green forehead-band. Sir William examined each for a brief while ; shifted his saddle to his left arm ; and continued slowly up the north hill.

The road steepened and wound about. Heans took his way yet more slowly up, making some effort to regain his coolness. Not far over the first rise was the Boundary, and by the roadside the white Watch House of the constables. Though still fifty yards away, he saw that the low door was open, and that in it, a man was standing in a black blouse and belt. He had often passed the place with Abelia, and once or so with Oughtryn, though never on foot. Now if, by a troublesome chance, he was stopped, he was prepared with a story of a pleasure ride, and the distant quartering of his beast. The circumstances were unusual. If he were walking far afield for a pass-man, his horse had been removed, and it was no business of his. "By Heaven, if they pleased, they could suspect him of a second gallop to Spring Bay!" He remembered on that occasion it had been plaguey cold, and he had ridden through the Posts as cool and hopeful as for a day's hunting with the Ravensworth.

Now he was hot with his tense tramp, his head ached, and his composure had been disturbed. Faugh, he would be in Launceston to-night! Who would suspect that of him with his leaden saddle and his *déclassé* old cloak!

Before he quitted the rise, he glanced swiftly behind. There were half a dozen people on the slope, respectable New Town folk bound his way. No vehicle. No roan horse. Down below Six's shop, however, he saw, or thought so, among several horsemen, the roan horse with the gentleman once more upon its back, at a standstill, and facing away from him. The man was fiddling with his fashionable white gloves, and seemed to be staring here and there. Heans turned away with a kind of laugh, and in a few strides he put the street out of sight. Though he was hot and very painfully excited, it was a fine relief to him that no eye now upon him knew the extent of his walk and its peculiar direction. With the Watch House before him, he felt considerably lighter in mind. He threw open his cloak and shifted his saddle to his other arm. On the right hand was the house, on the left the bridle-path on which he walked. A constable in black was in the door, and as Heans advanced, he was aware that another fellow came up and stood behind him. They stood rather high above a flight of four wooden steps, and he noticed that to see him it was necessary to bend under the white frame of the door. Heans passed sourly by, flicking the flies from his cravat with the tassel of his cane. "By G—d, their stare was heavy to be borne!" He thought they would have spoken to him. But they seemed to be lingering over something among themselves, for he heard the inner man distinctly mutter the words: "Every dirty card of a dirty pack." If they had called on him, he was prepared first to answer them with a "Good-day." On a sudden, he heard the bang of their steps as they left the door, and afterwards a loud echoing talking—almost an altercation—which continued while he was in hearing.

When past the Boundary, and along, and well up the hill above, how natural it seemed that he had passed unaccosted, and how much firmer were his spirits! Almost his difficulties were over! He anticipated no trouble with Gastine, an easy-going young English settler. As he climbed up, he debated a message from Oughtryn to his hand at Bagdad. The worst—the Hobarton streets—the Boundary—were behind. Better—better—better every mounting step. He knew, however, that he was still in sight of the Watch House, and kept to a leisurely and stately pace. He would soon blot that out, moreover. Fifty yards in front, the road wound behind the right-hand bank, and he would there be finally out of observation. Just here he met a civil young man who wished him a "Good-day," to whom he replied in his pleasant ceremonious way. When almost within the privacy of the

bank, he cast a last look below, wishing to satisfy his mind if the constables were still in the house or had come into the road. There was no constable in the road, though there were three pedestrians coming his way, and behind them, ambling along, the top-hatted fellow on the roan horse.

Sir William Heans seems to have been over-shocked at the reappearance of this haunting man, but kept on, making a vain attempt to explain away a reasonless anxiety. He considered the gentlemanlike figure as a visitor to the colony on his way to friends at New Town. What more ordinary! Or riding for the scenery towards Bridgewater. What an annoyance that he had clung to this peculiar direction! So he would begin and end. While he mounted nearer the top, sedate of pace, Heans heard a horse's trotting rise up and die out in the hidden banks, and about a minute after a single sudden hoof-beat behind him. He did not look at the rider, though he knew it was the same. He hoped he was as sick of him, and cloak, and saddle, as he of his roan beast and black rig-out. He did not once look back, though he heard the horse now ambling, now quietly walking. The beast was moving rather faster than himself, and he hoped it would soon pass him. For a long while he mounted the veiled hill before that springy foot. It was, however, yet in his rear when he walked quietly into the high village. Here he stopped a few moments, and looked for a while at the new landscape. His heart fell and rose as he heard the sheep-like fellow pull in his mount behind. There were some pleasant dwellings and two tracks to the right and left, and he hoped he might now be rid of those trying footsteps. Presently he ventured on. He went unaccompanied—sixty—seventy yards. He was still alone at one hundred. He was yet almost believing in the quiet before and behind, when, thinking the gentleman must be nearly out of sight, or gone down Kangaroo Valley, he turned and took a look behind. Sure enough there he was, a small, accomplished figure, quiet for once upon his horse, and looking over the vale.

It was now seven miles to Derwent Ferry, and six more to Jordan River and Brighton. Young Gastine's house was of slabs, and stood on the road about two miles beyond the village. All would have been well now, had his optimism not been shaken by the behaviour of his companion passenger. He could no longer persuade himself he was rid of the broad-clothed figure. He went on, quietly preparing himself for, and instinctively straining his hearing after, the "clip-clap" of those springy hoofs. His main hope now was that the gentleman would go clattering by, and leave him at last fairly to himself. Indeed, he felt it better, he informs us, not to again hope a change of road in his follower, and have his hopes flung down. If he might not take his way unwatched, he could stick to it under the man's scrutiny. He seemed a fine, handsome man, despite his rig.

How should he know he was causing a grave inconvenience and his figure become a devilish obsession! The very way he was killing his time at the cross-roads showed he meant no harm, and was engaged in a tour of personal enjoyment.

Sir William had gone a quarter of a mile, and had passed Leeworthy's, when he again heard a horse's trot behind. This time it was a pair of gentlemen in a gig. He went the next mile without sound or sight of horse or man, and his spirits, despite his firm intention, soared unruly. He slackened his pace and walked along at his leisure. It was pleasant to think how far he had won, and with no definite misadventure. Now a small child came from a hut, and walked a part of the way with him, from whom he obtained bearings as to the position of the house of Mr. James Gastine. It was the next house but one in sight on the left side, and about a mile on. Sir William rewarded the child with an old pen-knife. He was pacing along beside a bank, when there was a heavy rumbling of heels and hoofs, and the Launceston coach flung past him, with two priests and a red-coat on the roof. There was a woman in the body, and the sight of her dark bonnet cast Heans' thoughts to Madam Ruth. The coach was still in sight when again he heard rapid hoofs behind. The rider this time was a prisoner, the top flapping of his glazed straw, and a sack of chaff held before him on his saddle. Sir William stopped the man as he was cantering by, and enquired if he had passed on the road a gentleman in black clothes upon a fine roan horse? Before the prisoner could reply, there was a click of hoofs immediately behind, and the very figure under discussion came jiggling quietly on the roadside about the bank.

It fell on poor Sir William like a thunderstroke.

At a loss what to do, he dismissed the convict with a "God save me, here is the gentleman!" and turned and sat down as if to await him on a few stones by the road. The convict, with a glance behind, went slowly off. Heans put his saddle down, lay back, and crossed his legs. He observed the rider sharply as he came along. The other was a man of elegant manner, and came slowly up without changing his pace. He eyed Heans, but rather on his dignity, than rudely. He had a heavy yellow cane in his glove. Just before Heans' cairn, he pulled his roan to a restless stand.

In a loud, accomplished voice, he asked him: "Are you not a prisoner?"

Sir William Heans, after an interval, said that he was.

"'Pon my honour," said the man, "my business is a troublesome one! I am a constable. Is not your name Sir William Heans?"

Sir William, with some hesitation, said that was so.

"Have you a pass?"

Heans said, "No, he had no pass." "I need," he added,

"no pass at this time of day. I was about to go and take my horse."

"I see you have no saddle-cloth with you?"

"It is a long distance to Mr. Gastine's house," answered Heans; and a little breathless, but with quiet *sang froid*, he explained how his master's horses were at pasture, and the house filled with disagreeable preparation.

The man kept for a moment a somewhat haughty silence. Sir William gathered hope from the perfect courtesy of his face. His clothes, his air, his unsunned cravat, might have ridden straight out of Piccadilly or the Row itself.

"I am a young constable," he explained, curbing that restless roan, and addressing him with a steady gravity; "and I am not certain what to do. I cannot follow you any longer. I think I will take upon me to order you to return to Mr. Oughtryn's."

"Upon my soul," said Heans, "this is d—ly vexatious of you!"

"I told you my business was a troublesome one," said the rider, gravely and amiably eying him. "It will be better not to deceive you. Inspector D'Ewes saw you go past his window with your saddle at a little past ten o'clock. I am ordered to follow you, watch where you go, and if unsatisfied with the necessity (seeing the emergency at your master's house, and the attention of your master likely to be distracted) to bid you return and lie quiet for the day. That is the decision I have arrived at."

Sir William Heans, who was observing the man through a sharp glass, nodded, flushed with anger, and sat upright. He jerked his saddle again upon his arm. The rider turned his horse sharply about, but when facing and rearing south, he turned and spoke again in his accomplished voice: "Do not delay about the town, sir. Mr. D'Ewes, himself, may go up to the house this afternoon, and I shall ask him, if he does, to make certain if you have returned home." With that he let the beast go, and galloped off stiff and steady as a rocking-horse figure in a lithograph.

Before he obeyed the constable's order, Sir William sank back upon the cairn and thought the matter out. His hopes, if they had been slowly broken, steadied at last upon a fine if more desperate philosophy. Though gravely shocked and daunted, he saw the better enterprise was fairly barred, and he must now return through the town, and try his hand at the worse. Sir William Heans was not sentimentally inclined towards Madam Ruth, nor excited with O'Crone's attachment to her. Had he been freer, he might have been with those who christened it "infatuation," rather than with Mr. Carnt. Having made what sacrifice he could to help the woman, he now would return and take his seat in the fly. He was not so discouraged or disturbed by the ordeal that he had just undergone, or by the thought of

what he had just escaped, that this appeared to him impossible, or faced with any difficulty which he could believe to be extinguishing to gentlemanly courage. He weighed the matter as he sat in the quiet road, until he had it healthy and clear—thinking, as a Prince of many difficulties once wrote: "If it could not be, then in God's name be it so."

He stayed for some time musing by the roadside, but rose at last. He could not but see he was returning to many hated dangers. Straightening his hat, and removing and dusting his cloak, he threw the latter and his saddle on his arm, and turned back. He left the saddle at the first cottage he passed, to be kept till called for. Then with slow and quiet steps he passed down into the town.

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And now we come to what happened at the house on his return. Things went into singular hands from the very first.

He arrived at the back gate at between half-past two and three o'clock. He found both gates thrown open, and inside, shouldering the Chamber wall, was a carriage and horses, and gossiping with the flyman, a pair of old fellows holding saddle-horses. There was a deep note, a sort of braying uproar, in the Chamber, hall, and indeed the house top and bottom. In the hall he distinctly saw Abelia: the young girl very pale and listening to two women below the stair. The yard itself was otherwise empty; the stable door open at the top and silent. In a flash of grateful thought, he fancied Spafield at work in the middle of that indoor scurry, and not likely a witness of his coming in. He caught himself in wonderment whether any of those employing the soldier observed the weight upon his mind. . . . When he reached the small door and pulled at the handle, his fingers encountered something foreign and chilly which was bound cord-wise about it, but which a hasty withdrawing of his hand disturbed, so that it fell on the step. He instantly thought of the lost thongs from the stable, and that Spafield, in petty devilry and triumph, had slung them on the handle; but, in stooping down, he saw it was a small, dead, grey snake with a black cap upon its head, its body bruised with recent killing. He had hardly stooped, when along with the flurry in the house, and the gossip and clip-clap at the carriage, there ran up to his great disappointment—swift and definite as a bullet—that vile harsh singing:

Murruda yerrabá. . . .

and this, though he waited a minute by the door, he could fix in no direction, though he put it within the quiet door of the cave. Here was his welcoming. Sir William waited in vain for Sly to show himself.

In Sir Charles Scarning's portfolio of letters there is a passage, rising almost to eloquence, describing Heans' struggle in the privacy of his room for the right to chance his honest luck against the shrouding of forebodement and hasty conjecture aroused by his unlucky walk, and the buffet of lively enmity received at the end of it.

Indoors he found a maid on her knees at his passage, and though he looked neither to the right nor the left, he was aware there was a considerable number of excited people in the kitchen hall. He at once entered his sitting-room, where he found the evening cloth already spread, with upon it some salt meat and bread. His first action, still with his cloak on his arm, was to advance to the window. At first he could not descry Daunt's two gardeners, and believed they had gone, but suddenly he saw their glazed hats over the bushes which hid the gate. He was displeased to find them still in the garden for the obvious reason. Had he been successful on his walk, but been refused a horse, it was his intention to return to Macquarie Street, but instead of entering Oughtryn's, to await the carriage in the Orphanage grounds. He had thought of the hollow by the old gully-hole. Now, though forced back to the house, he entertained a wild hope that he might reach the same place by surmounting the wall. With the prisoners still in the garden the heliotrope was dangerous.

And in any case, he considered this rather as an ecstatic and fortuitous plan, depending upon preoccupied windows and the chance of the garden being empty. He intended, therefore, when he had eaten and rested an hour, to take a walk down to the gate and see how things were towards the Hospital. However favourable or unfavourable the result, he would not so early risk being found absent from the house. But later—about 5.30—when there would be a lull in the preparations, and the young people were returning home to dress, he would take another look, and if practicable, get out by the tree or the gate.

When he had settled all to a matter of minutes, he put aside his cloak, and removing the bridle, which had somewhat chafed his arm, he opened the cabinet, mounted a chair, and hid it as high as he could reach beneath some papers and magazines. The cloak he put on top. Now if a search was made, they would seek for him in his cloak and possibly on horseback. He then took his seat once more at the table, and ate a determined meal of bread and meat, seasoned with some gin and water. Nobody disturbed him. His room was singularly quiet, while above his head, and just across his passage, and on the garden path, were little scrapes and monotones of dallying or headlong movement. When he had done, he rose and went down the passage to his bedroom. Some people were laying a carpet along the kitchen hall, and a few gentlemen stood under the stairs by the door of the sewing-room, which was open. There was a figure standing

beside the left wall near the dark end, but he did not see for certain whether it was man or woman. He went quickly into his room. There he refreshed himself at his basin, and taking his plaid riding-jacket, his old spencer, and his peaked cap, from which he first cut away the blue-silk tassel, he brushed them carefully and laid them on a chair. To the contents of his black velvet waistcoat, one of whose pockets held his "poniard," the blade being thrust through the bottom lining, he added a pair of scissors, a mourning band—and that thoughtful addition to his possessions provided by Mrs. Quaid as part of the equipment of his pelisse: the pocket mirror. It was his intention to remove his moustaches.

A look from his window showed him four persons in conversation before the stable door: two being of the flyman type, the third the old carpenter he had seen arrive in the morning, and the fourth Spafield. The latter was seated gloomily on a keg, his arms folded, the cushion of his left shoulder couched against the black door. The others stood deferentially about his bold, dull face, which was the colour of a candle under his hat. Heans watched for some minutes this little conclave. The carpenter and one of the hackneymen did most of the gossiping, Spafield contenting himself for once with monosyllable or dogged laugh. Heans was still at his window, when the flymen stumbled away to a call, the carpenter waiting a little, and then following towards the gate. In a little the soldier rose himself, stood for an instant in a peculiar position with one hand and arm outstretched against the door, and went slow and at a sort of groping pace into the cave. Heans was much relieved to find the grisly fellow on this side of the house, and watched the shakoed head pass in, fancying a faint stagger in the heavy limbs.

Till four o'clock Sir William rested upon his bed; for he was, of course, unable to sleep. When he rose, Spafield was again seated at the door of the stable, his bold, sunken eyes upon the gate. Heans quickly took his chimney-pot from the toilette, and went down the passage to the sitting-room. He again passed somebody standing by the wall close to his end of the kitchen hall, and though he did not look to verify himself, something slender in the figure and groping in the posture reminded of Abelia. When in his room, he closed the door, and leant in a quiet attitude over the table. Then donning his hat, he raised the sash of the nearer window, and climbed out under the tobacco-tree. The day was still close, and the human odour from its limbs and leather leaves was acidly pervasive. He turned from the sentry-box, and with cane behind him, and a high, eyeglassed eye, stepped slowly along to the Hospital wall. At the corner of the path, he halted and looked back towards a top window whence issued sharp men's voices. He then permitted his gaze to roam downward about the garden. With instant relief, he thought the two prisoners gone. He could neither see them nor hear their

hoes above the jerks and clamours of the house. In a little he proceeded downward. Already the garden held in its delicate shadows the waning of this beautiful day. Each bush stood alone. The basin was a thing almost of beauty, singularly apart, and clear even to the gaiter on the soldier's leg.

Sir William, in a few leisurely paces, reached the cross path by the heliotrope. Among the heavy branches of the bush he perceived there was promising foothold. The corner of the place below him was thinly treed, but by edging a few feet westward, he saw through a break of bushes the gate shut against the decapitated pillars. Beyond it there was a man seated in a two-wheeled cart. He glanced about below the basin, but neither saw nor heard any one upon the lower paths. He suddenly heard, however, some one in conversation with the driver of the vehicle. It was a deep nasal voice. It might be a groom. On the other count, Inspector D'Ewes himself might hang about yet.

Before moving, he paused upon his cane and looked back again with curiosity along the comfortable house, majestic under the thyras of its single gum. There was movement in the Chamber, and Abelia's quiet window held a trio of posturing figures, rehearsing, perhaps, their tragedy. He was yet looking back, when an elderly fellow in a wig hurried to the door, wrestling with his great-coat, and Heans elected to wait till he was gone. He suddenly returned and called into the hall, and Captain Karne emerged and they descended with abstracted steps. The gentlemen passed without seeing Heans, who advanced towards the fountain as they descended about it and approached the gate. He was about midway between the wall and the main path when they went out. A half-step brought him where he had a glimpse of the gate and a portion of the fence. He saw the actors turn down the road, behind the railings. There was no one else in the road to either side, unless he was motionless behind a pillar. Near the gate, however, was the two-wheeled cart held by a man in pork-pie hat and blouse. On the path by the wheel stood a small man in decent black. This person turned as the gentlemen went by and touched a tall, seedy hat. He had a grey chin beard and a grim, careless face. Sir William saw him turn and saw that it was a markedly saturnine countenance. He knew the gentlemen, and the gentlemen seemed to know him, for one of them threw back a question, and was answered by the words, "Five o'clock, Captain Karne." What was to take place at five o'clock? Heans did not like the man's looks, and that peculiar mingling in his appearance of efficiency and seediness decided him, after the tragedy of the morning, not to show himself at the gate.

He did not stop, but paced quietly along till he reached the fountain. Here he paused again, contemplating the long house, the periwinkle in the basin, the carven stones among the foliage, without perceiving one of them. He was thus standing, when he

was startled by a loud 'good-night' below him, and turning, caught the man in the tall hat leaving the cart and departing along the railings. Heans hesitated a few moments only. Though secretly overjoyed to see him go, he would risk no more now, for fear of indoor overlooking, and holding to his resolution, he returned and regained his room by the main-path.

When he had stepped over the sill, he stood for a while with his eyes riveted on the garden; but at last, forcing himself away, he brought a "Solitaire" board from the cabinet, and sitting at the table, endeavoured, to while away the minutes with those unruly balls. When he returned the clock had pointed to seventeen minutes past the hour. Short as was the time he had been gone, his cloth had been reset and the fire lit and plenty of wood in the grate. There was even a vase of out-at-elbows greenery. An uneasy addition to his agitation was not the only feeling aroused by these attentions. Yet there was a peculiar air of unfamiliarity—of reproach—in the curious objects of the room and table, as if he had been gone for a period of days instead of moments. They were no longer there on his behalf—nor for his convenience. It was as a species of intruder he sat through the heavy seconds.

At the half-hour, that game of elimination became intolerable to him, and he arose and paced the room. Up and down—up and down! How remote the sightless eyes of the Roman! How jealously the marble figures held their doves! Whose books were those? Whose pampered bird was that? Not this distempered creature's with the tugging heart! Not the wild old fellow's at his sickening promenade! And how determinedly the gaiety of preparation hummed—the play outside went on!

At a quarter to five, he had wrought himself to such a pitch of suspense, that he became persuaded he would have been wiser to have changed his plan, and risked the gate when he had it before him. He decided to wait no longer. The man's remark hung in his thoughts. The likelihood that the hour of five was some important juncture in the ordering of the entertainment agitated his spirits, and persuaded him some new fixture might be then accomplished—some key turned—which would render more troublesome, if it did not endanger, his departure from the house. In this state of mind, he quietly opened his door and once more made for his bedroom. Outside, he collided with a flushed young lady running from the hall, and drew back with a smiling bow. There were several people close to his end of the larger passage, he was uncertain who, his eyes being confused by the lighting of some little wall-lamps.

In his room, he changed his clawhammer for the shooting-jacket, and over that buttoned the black spencer. Taking his peaked cap and a pair of mourning gloves, he went over and looked into the yard. With a pang of relief, he saw by his jacket Spafiel was seated against the cave door, though he could

not see his person for a couple of men in frieze aprons, who stood over him. One of these turning off towards the chamber, he observed that the fellow was splicing at a long rope, an end of it caught in his teeth and a portion about his foot. A ladder and some wooden pulleys lay on the flags. He saw his skilful, tallowy hands tremble with his exertions, and as he turned away, profoundly regretted he could not have bridled their wicked expertness to safer purpose. He at once returned to the sitting-room, scarcely changed in appearance from the clawhammered figure who left it ten minutes earlier. Without pausing, he again opened the window and stepped out. The day was fast passing, and already the grey veils to the northward were coloured with the tinsel they put in the chimney-pieces in the play. It was not till he had come from behind the sentry-box, and made a few quiet paces east, that he became aware there was a soldier with a shouldered musket among the foliage to the west of the basin. Heans walked on, however, distressed as he was, and endeavoured to come to some decision what course of action to adopt. When he came to turn along the wall, he had somewhat recovered his faculties. He did not consider it likely that the man would interfere with him, and if he did he would be under the necessity of explaining why. If the man accosted him, he would see what he wanted, and the man would have every opportunity of stopping him, as he came near, or before he reached the gate. He saw that when he reached the heliotrope he could avoid the meeting by threading his way through the intervening bushes to the gate, but he thought it better to turn west and do nothing covert. He, therefore, proceeded quietly to the heliotrope, and when he had passed into the western path, he stopped a moment and looked back, as if he would take a sharp prospect of the house. He heard the man's boots scraping clumsily along the path. When, next instant, he faced the basin and the soldier behind it, he saw that he had stopped at the other end of his beat, and that his observation was directed to the Chamber. In the quiet of that moment, he caught a soft, regular thumping below the path. He could see below him the rusty bars of the gate and a portion of the fence running east, and that all seemed open and clear. He began to move on, and saw clearly through another opening that the road was empty. Suddenly, between two bushes of lilac, he saw, pacing on the grass within the gate, a horse-constable in black blouse and heavy strapped *képi*. The man was not looking at him, but stared down, his cutlass hooked on his belt, his hands behind him. Dazed as he was, Sir William Heans kept on, his hands also behind him, his eyes on the path. When he reached the fountain, he stopped for a moment, raised his face, and watched the soldier at his paces. Then, without turning to look at the gate, he paced slowly back up the main path.

Not far from the door, he was passed by two young ladies and

a tall young gentleman in uniform. In the shock of his disappointment he stood to one side, the young fellow addressing him with the words: "The old place is in full fig, sir." For answer, he cackled out a sharp laugh, and moved on until he approached the front of the house. He formed the intention of pushing his way into the door and making a personal request to Oughtryn for the sun-set pass. But this intention was immediately thrust aside for the better opportunity born from an unexpected meeting.

There were two persons standing to the left of the door, beside the great stone ball, over which was a pretty festooning of flags. One was the gentleman with the horse face whose name was Sturt; the other a young soldier in strapped shako and short military cloak. There were also one or two persons inside the hall. Sir William walked quietly up, and, when yet ten paces off, looking in after Oughtryn, he saw Spafield standing near the rear way, balancing a ladder beside a gilt candlestick. He was staring into the Chamber. Some heavy piles of rope lay at his feet on the pink carpet. In his surprise at seeing the man there, Sir William stepped in front of the door. The ruffian at once turned a pair of singular cold eyes upon the prisoner; a look in which there was—for all the powerful arms which propped the ladder—a sort of meek and struggling horror. At sight of Heans, he gabbled a bold something, and turned and kissed his yellow hand at some one down the kitchen passage. Heans might now have returned to his window, when suddenly an aproned assistant entered the hall by the back, carrying a heavy iron street-lamp. The man shouted to Spafield as he came, and Spafield, straightening up, came after the other, carrying the ladder out before the door. Outside he turned and lowered it jerkily against the arch. Then, very slowly—mounting rung by rung—he began to attach a pulley by a piece of rope to the wrist of the stone hand which projected over the entrance.

One of the gentlemen nodded to Heans, remarking, "'Pon his word, it was a graceful sentiment: the lamp upon the out-stretched hand!'"

Sir William drew a step nearer and seemed to join in the interest of the event. It had flashed across him that by passing in, now, and down by the kitchen hall, he might go out immediately by the little door, and cross the yard unseen, to the gate. A slow and calculated stroll up Davey Street, and down by Watchhouse Lane would bring him in sight of the carriage as it drew up. He remained, therefore, only a few seconds longer, his quiet glass upturned to Spafield at his singular task. In those seconds, he thought the miscreant approached the carving with a sort of caution—that when within reach of the grey fingers, he sensibly swayed and hesitated, as if he could not bring himself to meddle with them: then darted at and bound the tags of rope about the stone with a decision and panting laugh

that had a note of grim relief. At the same instant he actually glanced back at Heans himself. Heans turned from him, and stepped into the house. He recognised no one in the beflowered hall, and passed, with head down, under the stairs, and along the kitchen passage, which was now lit with little bracket lamps, and carpeted in pink and yellow. There the place was quiet and empty, except at the far end, where stood a party of four women—two in shawls and bonnets. One of these he perceived, by her height, was the woman. She stood a little below the kitchen door, and though he did not closely examine who it was, he saw that Abelia was standing by the wall behind her in a curious, drooping attitude, her head being on her arm. Though distressed by the girl's appearance, and troubled by the thought that it was she he had seen during the afternoon in that part of the passage, he did not permit himself to stop, or even the last brief word that was on his lips. As they had seen him pass, he opened his bedroom door, and walked within for a few moments of violent suspense. By his watch it was now past the hour. He returned slowly from his bedroom, and let himself out into the yard. One old fellow in an old Manilla was walking two saddle-horses beside the Chamber. Through the open gates was to be seen a horse standing in a pair of shafts, the vehicle being invisible. Sir William walked over to the stable, and when he had looked once within the door, he turned and continued his walk to the gate. The vehicle was a light yellow gig, and there was a groom in claret at the reins. He thought the man stared at him with peculiar intentness. As he came into the gateway he slackened his pace to a stroll. When between the two gates he stopped and glanced up and down. As he was approaching he had seen about the right post the gleam of a pair of loose white breeches. A few steps revealed above them the clawhammer and leather hat of a constable. The man had a grey chin-beard, and it came as a double blow to Sir William Heans that it was the same fellow he had seen in the afternoon.

* * * *

He did not wait long at the gate. After a sharp examination of the horse and carriage, and a cursory look up and down—during which he gave the constable ample time to accost him if he wished—he returned over the yard. As he passed the hall, he saw Spafield's tall figure at the rope in front, and the great lamp glimmer slowly up across the door. He had but reached the kitchen entrance, when there was a startling great crash of glass, which set the two horses clattering and snorting, and the birds leaping on the eaves. He looked about him, and saw the old constable glance in at the gate, while he heard high to the front the soldier's rapid and insolent voice. Had the hand fallen and the lamp with it? Had Heaven struck the pretty fellow beneath it? Heans gave little thought to the accident—whatever it had been! Hemmed in as he found himself, and rudely wounded as

were his hopes, he gathered all his strength and spurred his spirits for another effort. The hands of his watch were at twenty minutes past five. It would not do to lose a moment. He might still obtain the pass from Oughtryn, and, with that in his pocket, face one or other of the gates. No harm could come of the attempt. He bitterly upbraided himself that he had not fore-armed himself against such misfortunes, and taken the precaution to demand a pass in the morning. He had for comfort, that he need be at no great pains to bridle his hurry, for he had had dealings over the pass not always even or free from vexation. Thrusting open the small door, he stamped in, hoping to find Abelia still in the kitchen-hall. He was relieved to see her bright head close to the wall beside a single shawled figure, her posture hardly changed. Stopping at the corner nearest his room, he called her by name, and she started with the other—lifting her head from her arm. Instantly she came feeling over the carpeted slates. A little way from Heans she stopped, very pale, and groping at him from her smiling peace.

Heans put his glove on the wall, holding his cap behind him.

"Why, miss," he asked, with sharp amazement, "what is that that has just fallen?"

"Something has been broken," she answered. "I fear it is a lamp that was to lighten the entrance."

"Upon my word," he cried, with a kind look, "a clumsy lout; he'll have to eat stick!" He then thrust in his glass and asked where Oughtryn was; and when she said she thought he was upstairs, he begged her "please to run sharply and get him to write a pass for Fraser's Club, for he must be gone out before six o'clock."

Abelia began to draw away, but lingered, looking up at his face, her left hand wandering at her ear and forehead.

"I told you I was in haste, miss," said Heans, unable to keep something sharp and annoyed from his voice. "Will he be pleased to put 'Fraser's Club'!"

"Yes, Sir William," she said, looking aside and feeling away, the lamp upon her ashen face. "I—I will tell him. . . . Yes, to-night. I will be quick. I will persuade my father."

Again she stopped, feeling at her black apron; of her face just left the shy movement of those restless eyes.

"Always so calm, Abelia," he said, tapping the wall with lavender fingers. "Be troubled for once, miss. I beseech you to make haste."

And at once she gave a sort of gasp, crying, "Yes, I will get it—I will try to get it," and groped in a blind hurry up the pink and yellow carpet.

At the door, she stopped an instant, sent a white look back, and went out. He heard feet feel up the stair over a rattle of glass and flurry of speakers in the hall.

He waited for five minutes in company with the solitary woman, and then went into the sitting-room.

His window was still open, and the shadowy place smelt strongly of the tree without. Again he stood for a few minutes an alien among his silent companions. The path was rattling with footsteps, and at the gate a hidden voice was in conversation. In the north-east sky was one of those old wounds which remind us of the echo of far guns.

A sort of lull had fallen on the house. Like some matured and experienced beauty, it had thrown itself aside in its beautiful dress to await the coming thing, and think on life. It spoke occasionally, in soft explosions, and from a sort of ominous repose.

It was twenty-five minutes to the hour before he heard a faint sound in the passage and a moment after a trembling knock. Sir William had been standing at the further window, and calling "Come in," he remained standing by the sill. Abelia came groping slowly in, and drew back searching till she saw where he was. She shook her head—or rather her calm head seemed to shake of itself—as she stood by the door. She was like a gentle ship which is tossed about while the people pray.

"It is no good, Sir William," she said, her weak eyes fluttering at last on his face; "he may not—he cannot."

Heans pushed himself slowly up, stared at her fixedly; then came half-round the table. This kind of encounter had occurred before between Abelia and himself. To-night he looked outwearied and estranged, rather than flushed and annoyed.

"Gracious G—d, miss," he said, somewhat harshly, "he will not give me a pass! What can have possessed him now!"

"I cannot answer for it," she said, twisting her apron and dropping her restless face. "He spoke very certain. He said he must put you off. But he had a creditable reason."

"Abelia—Abelia," said Sir William, turning his head towards the mantel with a sharp sigh, "I cannot suffer this. It is imperative that I should meet some one at 6.30. This is insufferable, my dear. Go back, and tell him I must get instantly away. I cannot allow anyone or any thing to cross this engagement." He took out his watch and stood staring at it as though its face were something grim which had amazed him, saying, "Sharply, my dear!"

Abelia, with her untroubled face yet dropped, said her father had seemed cross and frightened, and indeed she had tried to compose him. "He said it was no use to dally with it." Yes, she would go up to the Echo-room and speak with her father again; but she knew—she knew it would "only be a farding off of time."

"What, your father was angry, was he!" said Heans, swiftly. "Well, miss, here is a case in which I can permit no prejudice. By Heaven, creditable reason! Is he aware that this is insulting

to me? I can accept no reason—creditable or may be—from denying me egress from my rooms this moment."

Sir William, as he stared at the trembling figure, was reminded, with a swift pang, of the soldier's remark to her outside his bedroom: "Calm as shivering ice."

"He said," she told him, with a quivering effort at precision, "he said, there was mischief about, and no one—not mad cattle—would drag his name from him."

"He did—he did!" he cried, and turned away and walked with a sort of sigh back to the window. . . . "You may tell him," he said presently from that place, in a harsh tone, "I am deeply offended with him. Say to your father, miss, I will find it difficult ever to forgive or pardon further refusal of my natural request. Now, miss—if your faith is good—if I can believe in you too, miss—in haste!"

She turned groping for the door, yet raising for a moment her pallid face, and blinking softly at him. Her grey figure pushed clumsily away.

Heans stood at the window, and twice watched the red and white of the sentry's jacket flicker away and return stealthily among the carved bushes. He turned and looked at the clock. It was still twelve minutes to six. Almost immediately he heard a scrape outside the door and Abelia pushed her way in.

Sir William was surprised. He turned at once and advanced about the table. "Ah, so soon, my dear!" he said, in a pleasant, if low voice.

She held the inner handle and followed him with her glassy eyes, till as he came near they fled and fluttered on the hearth. Her head shook, and she seemed for a while, in a sort of calm struggle, unable to speak.

"Come," he said, more harshly; "you are standing there, miss!"

"Yes," she said, slowly, "I have returned very quickly; I have been unfortunate."

"Indeed now," with a stern precision, "cannot you speak less muddled?"

"Sir William," she said, serene and tremulous, "I have returned to tell you my father must not do it. It would be dangerous. He is not at liberty to give you his signature."

"Is it so, miss; is it so, miss? I can hardly believe your father!" he cried, with his voice much in his throat. And he put his hand for a brooding instant on the cloth, and then stood up and walked slowly towards the mantel. He put his right hand upon it. "And this is all" (harshly), "from your father, this beggarly answer?"

She began stealthily to look about her by the door, seeking half-flurried a new resting-place for tireless wings.

"There is nothing more to be expected," breathed she, rather difficult in voice. "My father says he was warned last night,

because that dangerous, drunken officer had hurt you. They think—and he thinks—it is the best for your safety.”

“Bless me,” he said, “they think of my safety! Hang them all, it would have been better for my safety—and less chance of mischief—if I could have got out of these walls to-night! Do my words trouble you, Miss Abelia?”

She fluttered glassy-eyed upon the window. “Such words—yes! they trouble me.”

He gave a cackling laugh.

“What, miss!” he said, and turned and gave her a sharp, slow glance. “What do you see, Abelia?” Here he seemed to remember her affliction, and laughing again, he turned and leant his brow upon his hands, saying, “Hush, miss: there is no more to say!”

The girl dropped her eyes, waiting a moment with her face in the old daylight, and then, with a disturbed and protesting exclamation, turned away and went out. Heans heard her wavering feet upon the boards till they met the carpet at the corner. She was gone and her pallid shred of peace.

Now to Sir William Heans, as he stood sore of heart and emptied of hope at the mantel-piece of his room, there occurred a last desperate and peculiar plan. At the first glance, as he wrote afterwards to his correspondent, “the idea appeared fantastic, even slightly disordered,” when a circumstance, “a noise heard at the other end of the building,” sharply thrust it into the feasible.

Resting near the left end of the mantel-piece, where he had put it the night previous, was the gilded leather book: the old carver’s copy of the *Plutarch*. Being a prisoner in the same place, he recalled for his comfort men who had endeavoured to escape the same walls, and failed. Instantly there came to his memory Surridge’s message and the legacy to “any other desperate man” who might come after. Some one had “pulled the body down,” if perhaps the last one in the murderer’s anticipation. Suddenly, as he stood over the fireplace, Heans heard two sharp clanking reports from the direction of the Chamber, as if an iron substance had been dropped upon a deal board, and this brought to mind the ropes and wooden pulleys he had seen at Spafeld’s feet in the yard, and later, in the hall. It was just possible the rascal might be absent from the cave, and occupied with his pulleys in the former room. The clock struck a shrill ‘six’ in Sir William’s ear. The house was for the moment almost somnolently quiet. From this time, until the first of the final arrivals, the yard and stable might be empty. Were a fellow slight enough in his person, and could he go so quietly across to the cave as to avoid the attention of the constable at the gate, he might make an attempt to climb by the convict’s vent into the bushes on top; by them across to the broken wicket; thence descending along the wall in time to reach the carriage by way of the Hospital entrance.

Sir William made this rash decision in the twinkling of an instant. He saw if he was to essay his freedom by the interior of the cleft, he had not a second to spare. He did not know how tight a squeeze it might be, or how much physical force it would need for a man of his height to progress through so small and slanting a fissure. For his comfort, Surridge had dragged himself some distance up the passage after he was shot in the body. The stone-mason had also found room in which to write and work. As for Heans' health and bodily well-being, he states that he was much fatigued, and indeed that his bruised temple and cheek ached provokingly, and that he undertook the rude trial rather on a sort of bitter understrength than in reckless heart. "At that moment," says he, to his friend Sir Charles, "I would have given my ears to have possessed the strength and optimism with which I always begin the morning!"

The minute hand of the little clock was yet in line with the hour, when he removed his elbows from the mantel-piece, and taking his cap from the window-sill, went into the passage. There was no one now in the lighted hall, and in passing he stood and listened a moment, hearing a steady flow of talking in one of the rooms abutting on it, and deeper voices, he thought, beyond or above the stairs. The main-hall was open and not yet lit, but the great room beyond seemed dark with a light like that of a single candle alive by a virescent hanging. He hastened on into his bedroom, and taking the key from the inside of the door, turned it in and removed it from the outside. He knew that what he was about to do must be done swiftly. On reaching the cave he would pause only to see that he was not dogged at heel. Once in the cleft, he did not believe any one would suspect where he had gone. Should Oughtryn see him from a window, and, disapproving of his again entering the "blood-crow's" quarters, follow after him, he believed he would discredit his senses before he would look for him in the crack; that subsequently he would be likely to return, and finding his bedroom locked, dismiss him to his privacy, sooner than credit him with running out without a pass. The same with any one else who followed him, Spafield only being with them in the secret, and he a man at odds with his own bad wits.

Continuing to the back door, he opened it a couple of feet and surveyed the yard and stables. It was as he anticipated. Spafield's powder-keg was by the door, but he at least was not in view, while the old fellow in the broad-brimmed straw had gone, he and his saddle-horses. A warm reflected light was yet in the yard, but the tide of night was floating in about the tall shrubs. The weather had been pleasing and shy for so sad a day. . . When he had opened the door and passed out on the stones, he saw instantly that the Chamber shades were down, while the shutters were closed on several of the small upper windows. Beside him the kitchen door was shut, and he heard

no sound from within the open sash. The yard was certainly empty of life. It was, or had the look of, dead-water here. In the opening of the gate the gig-horse was no longer visible, nor could he see the constable from where he stood. Moreover, it was not of great importance if the latter should see him enter, nor would he be more likely, for that reason, to extend his watch to the ground above. At that debateable ground he stole one steady glance as he began to go across, convincing himself there was excellent concealment for a stooping man between the vent of the cleft and the old gate, the small bushes massing in a scarce-broken chain to the ruins of the breach. Now—if a fellow had the luck to find an empty stable!

Sir William Heans went at a rapid, rather important pace across, his head lowered and abstracted, as though desirous of procuring at the last moment something left in the cave. As he arrived at the door, he heard from within the house behind a low and rapid outburst, which rather resembled Spafiel's style, though more echo than voice. He there and then decided, if he found the soldier in the cave, to turn upon his heel and return instantly to his rooms. As far as he could see in a side-glance, the gate-posts, and the lone lane between, were clear; though there was a repeated sound from there, or from the house, as if a man were rapidly striking on a large pebble with another.

Sir William stepped past the keg and came into the cave. Before he had well accustomed his sight to the troublesome borrowed gleams and slashed lights, he believed, from the quiet, his star was with him. There was nothing moving—horse or man—from him to the heap of straw. In the excitement of this impression he advanced and glanced into the harness-room. The close place had its usual fetid smell, but nothing stirred within. In the mouth of the arch he gave another few seconds to listening. As nobody stirred in either cave, he ran, rather than walked, the length of the stable, coming quick and quiet into the stall next the straw. Before climbing upon the manger, he flashed a look at his watch, discovering there were twenty-three to twenty-four minutes to the half-hour. He stood for a full minute listening beside the stone partition. There were voices talking in the house—in the open hall, he supposed—but they did not alter their even tone, or approach. There were other distant alarms, but no brush or slap of footsteps. Immediately he hauled himself up upon the manger. Here the fissure passed level with his face, not an inch wide and dark within. He thrust his fingers between the flat jaws, feeling no widening. He now got upon the wooden coping of the partition, and stood holding by the wall. As the straw was tight packed against the wall beside him, he threw himself, as he had seen the soldier do, upon the middle of the stack, landing in a sitting position with his feet towards the door. Swinging round to the wall, his legs found the hole they sought at the back of the

stack, and clutching rather wildly at both straw and wall, he let himself slide rather than lowered his body, till one foot came heavily in contact with the bottom of the manger. He was now wedged between straw and wall, having fallen somewhat out of the well, while in the dust he had raised in that dark, confined space, he twice coughed, having much ado to stay other incontinent explosions. At once, forcing his body downward, till he sat upon the trough edge, he felt before him with his hands, his fingers striking immediately upon the edge of the chasm and giving in, the chasm itself opening to the left of the well.

He found, when he came to press in between straw and chasm-edge, that the way within had been made easier than it promised, evidently by the working in it of the miscreant's shoulders. Though it was dark in the well, the chasm itself showed blacker, and he had the aspect of its contour in his mind. Wrestling himself in quicker for the help of the sloping trough, he presently lay on his chest entirely inside the stone berth. It was well for him, as indeed he says, that he had not an instant to waste in speculation, or dismay, over the happenings of a few hours since within the little catacomb in which he lay. There was certainly, he tells us, a something foreign in the worn angle of the upper side of his couch which he touched for an instant with one knee—an object, coarse and soft like a fragment of cloth, in which was folded something nobbed and smooth like the stem of a pipe, but that it was nobbed at both ends. Beyond this, the place seemed as bare as your palm.

All was black within, but as he raised his cap towards the crack, he felt a waft of air in his face, while a little wind sang, far up, like the whining of a dog. Just above, through a narrow fracture, sadly contracted for his negotiation, he could see a portion of the cleft, about nine feet long, lit from the stable-side, and sloping far upwards, with room enough at its widest, in shape like a pair of praying hands. Pausing only to tauten his gloves, he rose to his knees, and testing the slope hands-first (and finding it far smoother than he expected) he pushed upwards between the narrow walls; finding, when he was on his feet, that a hold or slot had been cut in the smooth slope into which his searching fingers fell, and the same higher up for his left hand, and, when he had drawn himself off his feet, a similar support, a few inches up, for his left boot. The slope here was fairly abrupt, but both the upper and lower surfaces were, or had been worked, smooth, a mercy for which he was thankful, seeing that for the most part the pass was so narrow he was compelled to keep his head turned sidelong. The middle and blacker part of these narrows, however, were wider than the rest. When he had wrestled up upon his left foot, his left hand, searching, found a slot in the middle of the sloping surface, his right feeling down and out till it found a holdfast on the lip of the opening—here not half an inch—over the third stall. Pulling over, his right foot now found

the first hand-hold, and he struggled and wrestled up out of the black narrows into the half-light.

This struggling in the dark between two pressing walls was breathless work and exceedingly distressing.

It was now gentler and freer mounting for some fifteen to sixteen feet; but above that, the roof began to sag again in a sickening fashion, falling at a long angle till it seemed to meet the bottom flat. Hauling after him his trousered legs, he made for this without pause; working forward rapidly on his left elbow and hip; for a few lavish inches in a coffin-like niche even upon the dignity of his knees. The outward slope here was sharper, and he had much ado to keep himself in the wider portion: to prop himself, so to speak, on these slippery surfaces, out of the pinching narrows above the stable. He was never far from the surface of the stable wall—from twenty-four to forty inches—and though the opening into the stable below varied in width, its light was distracting rather than helpful, and he was better served by some small shafts and glimmers from about and nowhere. Portions of the silent stable and its stalls were startlingly clear to his passing glance, and his clothing sometimes more clear above them than met with his approval. However, with no leisure to heed or stop, he worked rapidly up under that sagging roof, till it had bent itself to a few inches over the rising floor, and himself just moving upon his chest. He could not get his shoulders further, nor gain a view beneath. He began to conclude that somewhere here must be the murderer's cut, yet he did not think, since he had last seen the stable, he had risen sufficiently high to have come above the harness-room. It was darkish here, the north opening being a deep and narrow crack. Feeling along the roof with his hands, he found a widening away from the stable, but nothing he liked. It was long, and the rise at most an inch, while within, it had a black unwindowed look. He did not see how any man, however driven and reckless, would have pushed his body into so cruel a place. Down the stable side there seemed little change in the roof, though there was a curious crescent-shaped rise near its lowest extremity. Here, feeling about, he found, under the pencil-width of stable light, a deep depression in the floor, formed probably by standing water. It took him a moment to realise that this was his way. It was excellently smooth if shallow, and though plainly a natural feature, resembled a V cut in the stone, its narrower end under the sag and deepest there. There it would be possible to climb upon the side. When he had slid down and edged into it along the stable-wall, he saw, in the cavern beyond, that the roof rose dread inch by dread inch off the steep slope, the basin continuing level into the rock perhaps an inch or two beyond the point where his head lay. It was not a pleasing place. The upper roof kept so low that, though there was one longish beam of light close above, yet he perceived little of the

still higher parts, and what he saw, from the block of rocks, inclined him to think the cleft turned in. The climb had been more difficult than he thought, but the cut could hardly be many yards further up. He was inclined to high hope by the sight of some small ferns growing head-down in the grey light. Sir William conjectured he had been about five minutes climbing so far, and if he could manage it in another twelve, he would yet catch poor Jarvis.

Reclining on his left hip, his hands, an inch from his chin, found a couple of projections over the stable crack, by which he hauled his head and shoulders under the sag, and by further weals and projections disclosed by the light, lifted head and shoulders out of the socket, kicking forward upon his chest again out of the more crushing narrows. His face was still turned with his right cheek upward. Thus out of the worst and blowing somewhat, though in good spirits, he saw something through his arms which greatly disturbed him. Below his eyes, down the narrow opening, was a view of the stables, showing the ends of two stalls, and the back wall from the open to the second door. A sort of flicker of light attracted his eye downward. Just beyond the port-hole between the two doors, Spafield was standing in a dragging attitude, but looking in a direction near the lower part of the crack. There was a sort of stricken firmness in his bold figure. He held his shako by its chin strap and swiftly swung it, while his left hand he kept shifting off the wall and wiping across his open mouth and heavy chin, on which was fixed a smile that might have been a sneer, or a more horrid gape of reckless satiety. His long chin and cheek were wet with Heans knew not what, and his bold eye was heavy and mischievously cold. An appearance rather than a reality of humility was lent to his person by the long smooth hair which crept over the white of his collar upon the red below. Over his jacket-tails his "gully" hung at his cross-belt. There he was, in his way amiable enough, his pale face directed some few feet above the stack—whipping his dirty leg with his hat, and pushing up and wiping away at that amiable fixture.

Poor Sir William Heans, moving just free between the two walls, was doubtful if his struggles had been heard; or if the man had caught a rubbing in the cleft—was uncertain from what it was produced—and was watching the place in a kind of meek and deadly amazement. He watched him closely. He did not think the vile rascal was comfortable. He seemed yet blind to his position, and believed he was too meek for such a triumph. Heans squandered a few priceless moments eyeing the wicked fellow.

What now happened occupied the space of from three to four minutes, and took place in sharp succession.

Heans heard the man cry out a curious oath about "his body," saw him spring round, flash his hand across his eyes,

and bend his face to the port-hole. For an instant his head blocked the shaft of light, and Sir William saw his fingers go to his bayonet. Then he shot up, swore silently, and ran over into one of the stalls.

Heans was now out of Spafeld's vision, and he began immediately to push upward. He was arrested with a deadly qualm by a voice calling his name. Next moment the caves vibrated with Abelia's voice, and he heard her call out, "Father says, please—please to come back, and he will go out with you himself."

He looked down at the conflagration of the door, and saw her come groping through and feel her way calm and timid from stall to stall. He could see her fingers tremble on this post and on that. Again she stood still and beseeched him by name to "come back to the house." She seemed persuaded he was in the cave. Now he almost lost the girl; next he saw her with her hands about her face by a port-hole beam.

Sir William chafed agonisingly in the crack. He was shockingly angry with Oughtryn and his daughter. He caught quickly at a projection and pulled upward a few feet.

He was agitated, however, at Spafeld's disappearance, and once again sought Abelia's figure. He had not heard the slightest sound, but instantly he saw the gentle girl standing opposite the port-hole and thought from her face that she was listening, but saw that the man had crawled along the stall and had snatched at one of her hands. He was still holding down, and he could see his tall head only over the partition.

Perhaps in her amazement, or blindness, she had asked him who he was, for he seemed to Heans to be answering a question in his rapid way.

"Who am I?" jabbered he. "You remember my face! Good old Sly! No, I won't have crying—but mute crying! I agree with you—I'm a sharp man. But I'm lonely in my life. And here you are, treasured lady, my company and only comfort. You took to me from the first, didn't you? We're a pair of lonely ones. Let you away—never! Don't you make me cruel with any one!"

"Cruel!" said Abelia, her trembling voice very quiet and precise: "Oh no, you're very good to me, officer!"

"Ah, you see I see the advantage of you. There's a thing I'm friends with better than men. That's a thing I never ill-use. Playful like—feel how my 'and has you in a vice. What a good thing I'm tender fond of your liddle, pale face. Break your 'art, I loves you like a green jackass! And never ashamed of you—no, I'm true. Liddle drab, I'm true till the grave opens, and after that I'll be with you, if you want old Sly!"

"Oh, how your hand is trembling, soldier," said the poor girl, trying to see him. "You mean me no harm? You are ill. Your hand is trembling."

"Look at that now! Feel how tired I am! Bah, I understand you, Abelia! You took to me from the first. We ran it together, didn't we? Yes, I can be patient and I can be cruel, just like you. But there, it's adoration! Keep quiet! I'll put my loving hand on your mouth!

The fellow staggered upright, the facings of his coat vying with her groping visage. He pulled her near to him. Heans saw her face drop. She struggled. He kissed her poor, weak eyes. She gave a slight cry, and he put his hand upon her mouth.

There came a groan from the wall.

Sir William Heans began to return, and with a side-wrench struggled back behind the sag. Somewhere here he stopped an instant, and in a sad distinct voice said, "Be calm, miss. I am close beside you. You will soon have aid." He added, as calmly: "God pity you, you beggarly villain." Looking out again, he saw the girl duck and (taking advantage, perhaps, of a spasm of amazement in the red-coat) near pull apart, wrestling a few steps over to the wall, but in the wrong direction, to the east of the port-hole. Spafeld wavered slowly after her, his steady leaden glance on the wall behind. "Ah," said he, swift and harshly, "I hears a old cat mewin'. So that's where my noble was? I thought you was a dook—very near. You're coming to interfere between me and the drab!" He caught the girl again, and she hid her face. He dragged her hands away and again covered her mouth. The feeble girl struggled back, cowering into a corner of the black door.

Sir William swiftly pushed his way down under the sloping roof, and when presently he reached the cavern midway towards the narrows, he altered his posture head-downward, and so slid and struggled his way to the narrows below, into which—retaining his balance of mind I know not how—he entered on his chest and stomach, feeling for the hand-fasts, and guiding his person roughly from left to right, and vice versa, by his recollection of the ascent; steadily at first, for fear of a sprained hand, but, catching, with the fourth hand-fast, a glimmer of straw through the hole at the bottom, pushing and sliding with a jam and a heavy fall against the mouth or funnel; thence, flinging, rather than climbing, into the cavern beneath Jallet's broken key.

Feet first, he pushed out into the manger. In the gloomy straw-well there was a beam of light on the wall side, and in the sharp outline of the mouth. He rose in the manger, and climbing on the side, sought to get some hand and footholds in the straw, staying himself against the wall at his back. The holding proving inutile, he turned to the wall, and following up the crack with his glove, he found a foothold on which he pushed up within a few feet of the top. Here, touching, on a level with his thigh, a fresh unevenness—possibly the very carv-

ings of the convict Jallet—he inserted his right boot, and turning, sprang up and struggled out upon the walled surface of the hay.

The dazzle of the port-hole was distracting, but across the stalls he could discern Abelia's figure clinging yet with her face against the door, and that of Spafield, at the same instant holding one of her hands from her face, and glaring back from a grim, depressed attitude. The man looked back at the stack, his bold, high-cheeked face very white under the eyes, which seemed both narrow, leaden, and angry. It was a quiet movement. As he straightened up, and as Heans jumped down upon the manger from the partition, the latter saw with fresh abhorrence—beside himself with anger, loathing, and grief as he was—that there was a staining of blood in the corner of Abelia's mouth.

Her restless eyes were shut.

Sir William Heans descended into the stall, and from thence walked slowly into the next but one, where he remembered seeing his hay-fork leaning on the partition. He found and secured the fork, wiping his face with his handkerchief, and regaining his breath. Presently he told the soldier to "drop the young girl's hand."

The red-coat, who had been leaning on the door with his right hand, shovelled the girl's hand from his left to his right, and turned about till he faced Heans. He thrust his free hand, which was bandaged, under the facing of his jacket, pulled something out, and put his hand waveringly on the combing of the door. He took off this bunched hand, once, to meekly touch his tall, black head.

"We've 'ad a bit of a miff," gabbled he, keeping that narrow stare on Heans. "Break your heart, she's not free like she used to be with me! I believe it's you."

"You believe that!" said Sir William Heans, striving to hide the calm trembling of his hands on the hay-fork.

"My body, yes, and more!" said Spafield, with a pallid glitter of anger. "What was you about in those black cracks? You speak and tell me how high you was!"

"Yes," said Heans, in a quiet voice; "behind the cut of your old master, you cruel and haunted wretch!"

The fellow did not move, nor did he seek his bayonet, only elevating his long, bold face for an instant towards the cleft. At that instant, Sir William flashed up the fork, and sprang in upon him, making a feint high upon the arm which held the girl's, but aiming with all his strength on the muscle of the other on the door. He was afraid the fellow concealed some beastliness in that hand. The soldier was quick, dodging twice, and, by luck or judgment, receiving the blow as much on the white shoulder-cushion as the arm beneath. He gave a quick grunt, dropped down against the door as if shot, and made a dart along the wall behind Heans. The latter, however, prepared for such attack, swung himself back, with the back-sweep of his weapon, into the

mouth of a stall. He brought up stunningly against the right partition, with the red-coat raised on one knee in the way opposite.

The amber light at the few openings was softening, and tranquil eve was here.

Sir William spoke to Abelia, bidding her "run to the house," and with an oath the ruffian bade her be mute, adding: "You move, and I'll lock your 'and!" She stood where he had dropped her arm, her serene face huddled against the door.

It may be wondered at this juncture why Sir William Heans did not himself call upon the nearer constable. We suggest as one reason, that his outwearied mind forgot the man's propinquity, in the narrowness of the event—the agony of disappointment—and the gravity and justice of his aversion. Perhaps he put it aside, and perhaps too long. When aloft in the cleft, he had made no outcry, and his reason is plain. After all that had happened on that day, and on the evening before, as a prisoner he would hesitate to summon a constable in such a juncture. With what hasty story? Where had he been—with that red tale on Abelia's lips? What story would Spars have given?

But more, was it not less than seven minutes to the half-hour? There was danger to Jarvis Carnt, who might, even now, have gained the Orphanage!

While against the partition, Heans—stained, breathless, and bestrawed as he was—tugged at and opened the breast of his spencer. He was unable to get as clear a vision of the ruffian as he wished, being confused by the beam of a port-hole which he kept behind him over his shoulder; but he had the hay-fork up, and kept his eye on the gleam of his legs. Spafieid made, however, no advance, sudden or sly, on his antagonist. Backing sourly against the wall, he balanced with a kind of feebleness upon his legs, and began to retire towards the terrified girl. His right hand slipped stiffly along the stone. His bandaged arm hung low against his white leg. By thus returning, he a little lessened the distance between himself and Heans.

Sir William waited until he came closer by a couple of steps, when, stepping forward a half-step with his left foot, he aimed a flash-like blow at the back of his head, which the rascal, ducking forward, took on his pouch and bayonet; when swaying round off the wall, he flung himself on Sir William's left knee, catching that in his left hand and the ankle in his right. Doubling up his leg, he sent him, with a horrible sideways wrench, tumbling down on his two hands in the stall. Instantly, it seemed, the fellow's trembling hand closed across his mouth, and his uncertain knee pressed him heavily towards the stones.

The wicked man again beheld his prey from behind. He was now—like the tarantula—in his chosen position for attack. He had now that "advantage" on which he nourished. It was not difficult to say what this time he was about to do with it.

Immediately after, Heans felt a string-like band pass over his head and face, and draw tight between his cravat and chin. It was not till the thing began to grip inexorably, and his breath and sight began to fail him, that he saw with what steady intention the twist was being exerted. He had sunken from his hands, yet was still propped upon his right elbow, his extremities kicking upon the man's buttock, the fingers of his right hand endeavouring to get between the band and his neck. He felt that his senses were becoming unreliable. With a supreme effort of mind, he left to its will the choking thing about his neck, and thrust his hand through the breast of his clawhammer. He felt immediately the hilt of that burlesque weapon. It was there, low in the pocket, but his chest being at strain, he had some difficulty in getting his fingers round it. He had reason to bless the irregularities that were upon it. At that instant, in a moment, perhaps, of stupid elation, Spafield slightly relaxed the tension of his instrument, and bending liquor-haunted lips to his ear, said, "You might have knowned, Mr. Silence, I'd never die in these caves!" whereon Heans, twitching the hilt upward with fore and great fingers, slipped his thumb upon it, and presently got sufficient of the handle in his glove to grip it. He felt Spafield sink heavily down upon his back, and again there came a sickening pressure at the tourniquet. At the same moment, Heans, making a wrench at the "poniard," lifted it till the blade was free, and twice struck it back with all his force as high as he could get his arm.

Instantly the tourniquet relaxed, and with a grunt and a whinny Spafield sat rather than fell against the near partition of the stall. He was quite quiet. He breathed hard. His face, lying back in the port-hole beam, had for a moment a frightful look.

Heans wrestled from under him and struggled to his feet, staggering to the manger. Here he rested for a few seconds, when on turning with the intention of passing out of the stall, he saw the soldier sway up and tremble forward upon his right arm, his long face raised towards him grey as stone. He thought, indeed, the wretched man had something on his mind he wished to say, till in the port-hole light he saw that he was rising upon his knees. His right trouser leg was stained with a heavy soaking of blood. He rose very slowly, and with a groan fell forward upon his breast. He fell on his left side, and Sir William heard, between pity and loathing, that after he fell he muttered some loose prayer or petition for "heavenly mercy." Heans—dazed and faint enough himself—might even then have pushed by him, when a spasm of the great body disclosed that the sheath of his bayonet, near the left coat-tail, was empty. He had fallen on his left side upon his arm, towards the other, and almost across the stall.

His right hand, palm downwards on the stones, was not three

feet from the corner where Sir William stood. The latter quickly turned, and swung himself up by the partition to the manger. Spafield, who had been lying on his bayonet, shot forward on his left knee, brushing Sir William's boot with his fingers. The ruffian fell groaning under the manger, but as Heans, holding his knife in his hand, balanced along the sloping side, the soldier leapt up, and working rapidly along the manger-edge with his hands, hauled suddenly up, and aimed a ringing stab into the right partition, not a span beneath the strap of Heans' trousers, as he leapt over it upon his chest. Heans, however, was hardly lying upon the coping, and in the act of lifting his legs over, when Spafield was dragging steadily, in a curious sitting posture, for the mouth of the stall. His massive legs were crossed, and he pulled himself forward by his arms and hands, dragging the long weapon in the right. The angry patch on his leg now vied with his coat, but he held his betagged head obstinate and low. He was away so suddenly, and his progress was so steady and desperate, that Sir William saw he must be quick if he was to evade an encounter with the maimed wretch in the stall end. His judgment, however, being untrustworthy, and being still distressed in mind and breath from what he had escaped, he missed his footing on the manger-edge of the next stall, and fell heavily upon his side and elbow on the stones. He rose at once to his feet, and picking up the "poniard," which had flown out of his hand, would yet have run for the mouth, but already he thought he could hear the slither of the bayonet out in the open way, and sure enough there, an instant later, was the man, sitting quiet, leaning on his hand, before the stall.

Sir William tells us that at the same instant, behind the red-coat, the grey dress of the child caught his eye. Her face was turned inward against the door.

As he backed into the corner, endeavouring to steady himself, Sir William was not certain what to do. He might run fair at the miscreant as he sat darkly eyeing him, and risk a stabbed leg or a fall; or he might leap up and scale perhaps the next two partitions, so gaining on him, and getting before him to the yard. Spafield, as if he divined the latter chance, dragged himself a few inches nearer the right partition, but there again stopped. It is possible that, having heard Heans fall, he imagined him more hurt than he appeared—perhaps unable to climb. He may well have thought this, seeing him standing against the manger, somewhat bowed, and leaning heavily on his arm.

Spafield eyed him for a time, and then began to drag himself into the stall along the opposite partition. He dragged himself in with much exertion, about four feet: pausing there and painfully moving his crossed legs outward across the stall. Afterwards he moved a few inches further—his face, as the other did not move, filling with a sort of black anger—and with some oaths and groaning began to draw in his left foot beneath him.

Heans now thought him near enough for safety, and turning, backed himself by his right hand up upon the manger. In his left was his "poniard." Here he stopped to see if the ruffian would continue (when he would have sprung back upon the coping); but seeing that he did not, but immediately whirled about towards the way, he leapt rather than stepped along the manger, and sprang upward upon the next partition.

It was sharp work now on both hands. Sir William Heans endeavoured to outdistance the wounded man in a climb across the next two or three stalls, while it was plainly the mad fellow's purpose to stop him ever reaching the door. Sir William swung across and dropped sharp upon the next manger. He put all the speed and judgment he could summon into the breathless race; the while, with a quick and groaning effort, Spafield flung himself into the open way, and with steady, dark head down, and tapping knife, was shouldering those heavy limbs after him along the stones.

Heans, avoiding a chain, and balancing with his knife-hand along the wall, was in three steps against the next partition, and as quickly astraddle it. Swinging over and dropping, he was aware that the red-coat, with powerful arms and hands, was bowing his steady way but a few inches behind it. The dragging noise of his limbs and the regular "slip-slip" of the steel upon the stones made an unpleasing and never-to-be-forgotten sound. Again Sir William safely balanced his way along a manger-edge, and reached the stone division. As he pulled up upon it, glancing into the way behind, he saw the ruffian dragging but a few feet behind it, watching him from that low head. He seemed, as Heans saw him, to pull his whole leg beneath him, and propel himself forward with a sudden spring, which must have brought him alongside the division, as Heans dropped upon the next manger, for he was panting at the stall end as Heans went across. This time Sir William dropped into the manger itself, not trusting his wearied steps upon the edge. He knew by some furniture of the place that he was in the last stall but two, or the third from the door, and that the effort he was about to make must be made in the next, or the following stall; preferably the next, the first being much contracted by the overhanging of the harness-room. In the flash of that instant, as he stumbled his way across the manger, he knew that he would be unable to outdistance Spafield. By the time he had hauled up upon the next division, sprung clear, and dashed for the mouth, the red-coat would have dragged within the distance of a spring. He could hardly have thought his chance of serious worth, if upon the effort of another climb he were caught by those skilled hands. Two courses were open to the dazed man. He might make a black game of it back and forward over a partition till the hour, or beat him yet and get into the yard. The last was the main intention of his mind. As deep, indeed, as it seemed that of the wicked, panting ruffian to keep his own distress as quiet as he was able.

Their quiet was a point on which they seemed agreed.

Even as he clambered up, half-blind and choking for breath upon the manger, Sir William had decided upon adopting a dangerous ruse, which, while it won him a pause, faced him, in a few minutes, with a precarious end. In the stall behind the one he was leaving, he had twice come near to missing his footing on the chains. He determined, when dropping from the top of the next, to counterfeit a slip and a second fall somewhat along from the corner of the stall, and so place the now exhausted murderer a second time in a quandary, whether to directly approach a fainting man, or, doubting his malady, which place of evasion to guard, the stall-mouth or the last partition.

Sir William made the leap twice—falling back into the manger with an intention only half-calculated—before he topped the partition. Throwing his leg up, he straddled the coping an instant, then swung over the stall towards the mouth. Even as he swung, Spafield, with a ghastly bowing and straining, struggled level with the partition. In the stall Heans fell upon his feet, but instead of letting go, clutched for a moment wildly at the coping, and sank with a slight cry upon his back, rising again in a faint and groping manner upon his elbow. At the same instant, the soldier came with a quick spring, and a slap and slither of steel, near to midway across the mouth. He fell prone, with his knife under his deadly face, but seeing instantly what had happened, wrenched himself round by his hands close to the division he had just passed. Sir William, with a sharp effort, sat upright, and got, with a white glare of fatigue and blindness, upon one knee. His rusty dagger hung half-forgotten in his left hand. His right glove clutched at the stones of the partition above his head—which, as something which knew its danger, seemed to waver towards it and yet steel its striving senses against the support. Here was, or seemed to be, a wounded quarry, after Spafield's heart.

The red-coat, however, was not so certain of his fortune. Pulling a foot inward, and raising himself on his arms, he examined the fallen man. The tired panting of both men became audible.

If the grisly fellow was not quite certain how to take the man before him, he quickly decided upon a course of experiment. He began to drag himself close in along the partition against which Heans leaned. The half fainting gentleman allowed him to come foot after foot into the stall; then, coming late to his senses, he groped feebly upon his feet, and limping half-upright, began to go back with knife held up and glaring face—back and outwards a few defensive inches towards the centre. Another inch and Sir William would have been by the deadly ruffian and out into the yard. Spafield, however, came no further. Plunging immediately round, he flung himself diagonally across the stall; and indeed made no wait there, but dragged back

heavily to the bottom of the next partition. Heans, too, lost no second, but flung panting back, and sank beside the opposite wall, close to his first chosen spot.

Spafield sat blowing and panting here but a few moments. He had got himself round again with shoulders opposite Heans and his one leg drawn beneath him. There he lay and heaved, his long head mostly low, his eyes also low for the most part, though now and then the cold gaze looked up.

He began to drag forward again, almost straight for Sir William Heans, but in a direction a little behind him. This would have taken him across the centre of the stall; thus, making for a point just behind that where his enemy hung. He seemed to offer a gift to the dazed man of a sporting dash out, but in reality, and on the glaring face of it, had Heans delayed an instant where he was, it would have put Spafield, near the centre of the stall, within springing distance of Heans staggering out along his wall, or staggering back into the right corner of the manger. Heans' frantic defence was a retreat towards the left corner, with the threat of again negotiating the manger and in turn the last partition, provided the wearied and weakened ruffian enterprised so far into the stall, repeating his first attack on his exhausted and breathless opponent.

Spafield, however, showed an abnormal rawness and nervousness, instantly flinging round to the left across the mouth, even as the other struggled upright, making his white-eyed retreat. Almost as quickly Heans plunged back after him; but staggered again to his knee against the wall. Spafield lay there for a while upon his knife.

At last he rose again upon his trembling hands, and painfully shifting his legs round, moved further under the right partition. His face had a stonier, more exhausted look. He began to drag inward along that division, gasping heavily. He held his head low and sidelong, his face showing a mixture of jaded impatience and deadly qualms of faintness. In one of these he stopped, his head resting on his left elbow, and despondently eyeing the stones between himself and Heans: The bloody patch on his upper leg had spread below the knee. He looked weak and disillusioned—only half in step with his terrible work. His panting face, narrow as was the stare—and his straining body—had an air somewhat asking for agreement, somewhat familiar, somewhat ashamed. Was there a sneaking wish for clemency in Spar's grey look? Is not the demand for forgiveness often Wrong's last card?

Sir William, kneeling by his partition—himself at handgrips with exhaustion—wondered was he spent, and if not, where was the trap?

Where lay the plan in this distant stalking, and clinging to the other wall? As he advanced in, a foot at a time, Spafield began to give him nobler and nobler chances for a dash out. Was the

wicked wretch stupid with his terrible exertions? Rather, was he tempting him out with a bait? The full length of the stall was about twelve feet. The spot where Sir William knelt was about three feet from the manger. Spafield pulled in along the opposite partition for some five feet, and then, after a pause, continuing his inward drag, began to roll out at an almost imperceptible angle nearer the centre. Sir William did not immediately notice the lessening of the distance between them by so deliberate a movement, but being puzzled by his daring so far in, and at his momentarily opening, with his approach to a level with himself, a more wonderful chance for egress, he happily discerned that he was no longer hugging his wall. Spafield was now over seven feet in and still two feet nearer the mouth than Heans. There was, even now, at the moment he was caught at it, a gap between his red jacket and the wall beside him of twenty-five inches. Heans no longer dallied with the alluring bait, but rose to his feet, and sprang half round to the manger. No sooner did Spafield see him get up than, quick as a flash, he swung up his bayonet by its point, and spun it whistling at the back of his head. The weapon caught the much enduring gentleman a blow on the side of his cap, and he fell wildly into the piled straw, his hands catching for support at partition and manger. His blood was up, and he endeavoured to see collectedly through the labouring and confusion of his senses. He was down on his right knee in the hay. He succeeded in doing so to the extent of perceiving that the ruffian was about to spring upon him. He heard the screaming cry of his breath. He saw some six feet in front of him his dark head, low—saw him jerk under him his left foot and fling out a red arm. In an instant the white facing of the soldier's coat hurled upwards, and with a defensive and instinctive memory of his chosen place of attack, Heans whipped up his left hand, with the "poniard" in it, to the cap of his knee. Spafield had again chosen that way. The man fell upon him with a terrible force, the knife entering his breast below the cross-belts. With a strong, long groan he sprang upright upon his feet, swayed life-like for a few seconds, then crashed down upon his back, rolling over and over into the mouth. There he lay, face up, for a while moving his arms like a man swimming; then falling quiet, the hilt still in his coat.

Sir William staggered to his feet after him, and sank again to his knee, and to his back among the hay under the manger—there watching the fellow die with a grave eye. Presently he removed his gaze with a sort of impatience, and looked sadly into space. So the day was over, and the evening's gaiety was about to begin! His despondency then came very heavily upon him, and as he lay there, he repeated to himself in a sort of monotone certain words which occur in a writing in the old book: "For where is now my hope; who shall see it?" again repeating, after a sad interval of quiet: "For we are saved by hope: but

hope that is seen is not hope : for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"

Suddenly there crept upon his hearing the sound of some one crying.

It was the poor young girl. He called to her : "Do not weep, miss."

CHAPTER XX

MR. DAUNT'S CARELESSNESS

WITH regard to the little play alone—who will ever forget the evening who was present; or the strange, simple old house; or the garden with its broken stonework? Sir John remarked that the “room” had certainly “been built for speakers.” The advancing echo of the violins with their “Campbells are coming” was charming. While, when the violet curtains were withdrawn from before the western end, and the “Hall of Halbert’s Tower” was disclosed, Lady Franklin was heard to inquire whether the “carved ram’s-horn mantel-piece” was “actual stone.” The ladies and gentlemen voted the play most striking and noble, though many condemned the fair Helen for loving the wrong gentleman—handsome as he was in his majestic villainy, full of haughty triumph as were his sinister words: “Our regiment mean to teach your clan the finest of all lessons: the art of spending life.” As for Halbert Macdonald, the generous and unfortunate young chief, he seemed to exult in his noble sacrifice, and who will forget his plaided figure as he stood at the little window beside the chimney, and apostrophised, in fact, the mountain luminary:

O, blessed star
Of morning, do you wait upon that cone
Whose whiteness mocks our marble, to renew
The calm cerulean distance can impart
To thoughts of earth’s brief struggles? Linger yet!
It sinks; ’tis gone; its peace is in my soul.

It was excellently portrayed, the acting of old and young vying with the realities of the room; the pretty sorrows of the participants with the sound of the drums and fifes outside in the garden. The actual tragedy in the caves had been carefully hidden from the guests. Those who knew of an affray had been cautioned, while, that an actual death had occurred, close by, a few hours previous, was known only to one or two of the men. A small conclave of gentlemen, awaiting Sir John Franklin in the little room off the entrance, had gravely discussed the tragedy, and the master of the house had been summoned. Oughtryn’s

story, and that of Dr. Wardshaw, who was watching his daughter, had created distinct sympathy for Sir William Heans, who still lay in his rooms. The case was remarkable. The soldier had been stabbed to death, but there had been a long pursuit, while a peculiar instrument and marks of attempted strangulation had been found on the prisoner's person. The old master of the house played his part pretty well, facing Sir John Franklin, and revealing nothing, as he was bid. Few heard tell of the terrible affray, and those who remembered to enquire after the shy child, Abelia, were told anything than that she had been taken away between life and death.

It is no use pretending the company was anything but most amused and gratified. When *The Fate of the Macdonalds* had been settled, and tea had been toyed with, the green chairs were whisked under the walls, the violet hangings tucked away, and those staid, bewhiskered gentlemen circled the floor. The girls soon lost their playgoer's pensiveness, for there was dead "Halbert" in his rough plaid, and traitor "Henry" in his black periwig, polking in line with them against the chalky old paintings on the walls. Aye, and "Mac Ian" and "Lindsay," a pair of too-portly enemies, at their wine; and wilful "Helen Campbell," her bridal veil thrown off, attitudinising beside her pretty, imperious Excellency before the mantel—on her right, in clawhammer and white breeks, Sir John Franklin himself, grinning away with his tragic, obstinate, round English face. Indeed, "Mr. Daunt's discovery" was a success. The novelty and freshness of partings and meetings in such a place appealed to nearly all—weighed upon but a few. The innovation of the police Commandant was much praised.

We may imagine the decoration, the pauses of the piano, the loud and level conversation, the candles, the black silks, the curls. Mr. Daunt was his efficient self—with a steady-eyed word with this one, and a hard smiling patience for that. His not obtrusive figure shared a sort of mild notoriety with those of Captain and Mrs. Hyde-Shaxton, because of something "prejudicial" he had said of that beautiful woman, and the reconciliation that had been come to between them. All had heard, and many besides old Chedsey had seen the "lavender pad"—with the leather pocket in which the prisoner had hidden his notes; and many besides her amusing husband had expressed grave anger, all of which had been happily terminated by her clever unselfishness, and (quickly meeting Mr. Daunt) her determination the *bal paré* should not be jeopardised for a private quarrel.

If people will only keep their tempers, so much may be forgiven! Besides, it was said Captain Shaxton's wife had been in grave fault with the law, and invited her vexation, from her romantic action. A good woman cannot afford to be indiscreet!

There was a general interest in this lady, so erect and frail, her staring eyes so uplifting, ardent, and good. While old Captain

Shaxton, with his fun and his subdued giggles, was made quite a favourite. Many had scented the attachment to his wife, the agony of mind, and the endurance of purpose, which had been hidden under his amusing threats. They felt it was deeper than if he had expressed himself "open and dangerous." Here he was mildly laughing away the instinctive stares of curiosity, and here and there, perhaps, a mild look of wonder. What a power is a little moral courage!

Yet we press too much on the passing curiosity about these people. The interest of the hour and the night was in devoted Lady Franklin, in whose honour the company was assembled, and who had the daring to accompany her veteran discoverer across the untrodden peaks to Macquarie Harbour.¹ Still we must not forget to chronicle old Miss Lecale's remark: "Who but the Commandant," she said, "could have engineered it so that if he lost he won." Again, Mrs. McKevin of Isnaleara—the promoter of the "farewell *soirée*"—had her little defence, so it was told. To the gentleman who remarked that, "he was not such a very dangerous fellow after all," she replied, "Beware how you are severe with my Commandant. He does not often boast." While there was old Captain Shaxton's joke about the "exploring party." Some one remarking that "Lady Franklin would set a new fashion in chignons and white silk slippers at Macquarie Harbour," Shaxton had prophesied delightfully, it would be "a bold front and snow-shoes!" Yes, we may fancy, amid the whirling throng, the jests—the courteous fears—the steady-spoken congratulations! There they went! And of course there were matters between people whose united ages would not have reached that of their handsome hostess, as important to them as these we have told.

In the midst of all this pleasure and amusement, we may imagine how the news fell on the guests that "Captain Shaxton had just shot Mr. Daunt in an empty garret above the ball-chamber."

* * * * *

Luckily, poor Mrs. Shaxton, who had been up at gun-fire with some scenic arrangement, had made her adieus and slipped away. It came out afterwards that Shaxton had been standing under the stairs talking into the actors' green-room, when Daunt, coming behind, and calling over his shoulder for Tipton, Shaxton turned, looked at him for a moment, and asked him off-hand, "why their friend H. was locked up?" It seems he had some information. How he had come by it is inexplicable, since by strict request the fatal affray had been kept from him and his wife. He had heard sufficient, however, of some half truth to know that Sir William Heans had been caught in a scuffle

¹ Then deserted.

about a woman during that day and some one had been hurt ; and being depressed about it, had gone along to see if he could speak with the prisoner, in whose debt he was, but had been turned back by the police. He had just returned up the passage. Few knew there to what he was referring, except Captain Karne, who had been with him in the stable on the night of the inspection, and, knowing both men, was restless in the matter. Daunt looked at Shaxton quite amazed, saying, "You needn't pump me, Shaxton ! I'm worked to death ! Go to Gold or Magruder," and immediately left the door : going back under the stairs, and after calling for Tipton, turning and mounting them. Captain Shaxton, muttering something about "pocket-handkerchief in the cloak-room," after an instant went off and was heard to go after him up the stairs. Karne, not quite easy in his mind, waited in the green-room for five minutes, when growing more uneasy, and fancying he heard a pistol-shot over the piano, he beckoned his friend Kent from the ballroom and together they mounted to the upper floor. There was a ladies' waiting-room to the left at the end of the front passage, and there were two for the gentlemen along the passage to the right. Karne had met Shaxton with the arrivals in the first room of the two—a small square cabinet—the second room three doors along, had, in fact, hardly been entered. The passage was not well lit. The two young men paused in the first door, and seeing nobody there, passed on to the other. They smelt a faint smell of gunpowder. The room contained a few turkey-worked chairs and a round table on which was one candle only. There was nobody here either, but across the end of the passage a door stood open before an unlit room. The alarmed Karne beckoned onward the half incredulous Kent. As they came up a door within slammed. This chamber was furnished as a bedroom, as the moon showed, but a door at the back was lit beneath. Though all was silent, Karne pushed across. Listening a moment, he suddenly flung the door open and ran in. This was a small, longish room, quite bare, and a candle stood by the skirting opposite the door. The shutters were closed behind the broken glass, which had been stuffed with bits of cloth and mended with paper. The two gentlemen stood against the wall in opposite corners—Shaxton by the east window, with his coat off and a stained handkerchief bound on his shirt-sleeve, which was raised in the very act of aiming a little flint-lock pistol at Daunt. The Superintendent stood in a curious, bowed position beside a door in the corner. He was looking sternly at Shaxton, with one small hand spread on the gilded panels, and a similar weapon hanging in the right.

* * * * *

What happened between the two since they ascended the stairs is not known. Had they disputed in the second cloak room and

gone together to this remote chamber? Or did Captain Shaxton, not finding Daunt in the first rooms, follow him with a candle through the two rooms at the end? Old Captain Shaxton never told the story—except that they fought upon an old matter in dispute between them.

* * * * *

Captain Karne immediately sprang between them, crying out, "Stop, sir—stop! The Commandant is not shooting!"

Shaxton lowered his trembling weapon, saying, "Be hanged to you, I let him shoot first! I was in his debt."

"Is that so, sir?" asked Karne, looking at Daunt.

Daunt gave a little nod.

Karne drew back, beside Kent, who was in the doorway behind.

Hyde-Shaxton again put up his weapon. He had lost a good deal of blood. There were spots of red on his black cravat, white waistcoat and trousers. His trembling mouth had a determined drag.

At that instant Mr. Daunt said, "One moment—I—one moment——" He had not moved, but his sharp, implacable eyes dropped in a strange way to the floor. Shaxton tossed his chin and just lifted his pistol above the other's head. He looked very grave. Both Captain Karne and Kent moved forward a step.

Thus Commandant Daunt stood for a matter of twenty seconds, none of the three gentlemen knowing quite what to do or what to make of this unfair demand upon his opponent's patience. Then quite briskly and collectedly he remarked, "Your pardon, gentlemen, there is something wrong with my sight. I see two of every one here." (As he spoke he raised his dark, immaculate face and looked at each in turn). "The floor," he continued, "the floor sways there in front of me. A moment, sir—I have a strange fever in my stomach——"

None of the men moved, neither Shaxton to lower his weapon, nor those standing by to interfere.

Hardly had he spoken when he sank with a jerk to one knee, and his pistol fell rattling out of his grasp. He then fell sideways upon his hand, and Kent approached and stood beside him. He began to breathe hard and terribly. Several times he seemed about to fall his length, and Kent knelt down and unbuckled the spotless cravat inside the velvet collar. Captain Shaxton let his pistol-arm fall and turned to the little window. Thus they waited—the distant music the only sound—the stricken man leaning upon his arm and breathing terribly, his face and eyes directed on the floor with an ashen vacuity of look.

Karne suddenly remarked he had seen the Government Surgeon in the ballroom. He addressed Daunt in a hoarse, formal voice, asking should he fetch him up. Daunt raised his keen eyes, trying to fix them upon the speaker, and complaining he was blinded. "The place falls under me," he gasped swiftly

out. "I am extremely ill, sir! Yes—yes—fetch him, if you must be running up and down. You youngsters—pah, this is death!" With this he dropped his head sourly, and seemed as if he would have sunk face-down upon the floor, had Captain Kent not snatched at his shoulders and raised him with his left arm over his knee. Thus hung the stern Commandant of the foot police, his old eyes on those bare boards, with his sharp, ashen face framed in its short side-whiskers and greying hair.

Captain Karne hurried away, returning in a few minutes across the bedroom with the brisk old surgeon, bitter Mr. Craye in a tall bitter cravat, and Captain Garion, of the police. Shortly after these gentlemen, old Magruder entered, with a couple of decanters, followed by Sir John Franklin himself; and last the old forgotten master of the house emerged from darkness and stood holding open the door, with blind, obsequious eyes.

* * * * *

In the ball-chamber, Karne's shorn air, and the object of his enquiry, aroused some notice; and by the time he had found the doctor, and in whispering his information, delayed a quadrille, people were asking had something occurred. A substitute for the doctor was found, but the latter, after hurried consultation, thought the news should be further circulated, and in a little Franklin and others were observed to go out. Either by inference, or leakage, the news flew that the doctor had been summoned to the scene of a quarrel. How unseemly! On an occasion so perfectly angelic! Captain Shaxton's name was mentioned. The Captain and Mr. Daunt were missed from the room. They would not dare do it! As from nowhere, shot the hydra-headed legend that the two gentlemen had been pitching into one another in a room above. Had the Commandant of the foot police wounded sprightly Captain Shaxton? Why, no sir! No, madam! I protest I can hardly believe it! It was t'other way! I take my oath, it is Mr. Daunt ha' been winged! What! Hush! Handsomely, gentlemen! 'Pon my life, sir, I can assure you on my word of honour, the Commandant, poor man, is——"

A young girl fainted under the south windows.

Old Mr. Duterreau, standing between her Ladyship and Miss Crackcroft, stopped the music, and requested a hearing from the ladies and gentlemen. Heaven knew, he said, what fantasia would next be swimming into fair or handsome heads! He implored them not to mar by misconception or romantic tittle-tattle so happy and so noteworthy, so ingenious and so agreeable an occasion. He wished to make it clear to everyone that the Commandant of the foot police, Captain Daunt, had not been wounded, but seized by an illness, somewhat severe. In a few moments he hoped they might be reassured. So saying, he smiled and signalled to the violins.

* * * * *

The Government Surgeon rose to his feet ; stood looking at the patient as he pocketed his instrument—lightly, ponderingly ; and turning on the others with a little smile, shook his head. He left on the floor before Daunt a wine-glass half-filled with a muddy liquid. There was no wound. The old sulking fellow with the pistol and the guilty mouth, by the east window, was safe. It was the heart and stomach-fever, to attacks of which the Superintendent had been addicted. It was about to end.

The surgeon whispered some instructions to the clergyman who was behind him ; and very definitely answered some questions from the group at the door ; proceeding thence to Captain Shaxton, somewhat short of sight, and with a "Come, sir, have you the bullet in you ?"

The reader may picture to himself the room, the candle, the once-gilded woodwork, the once fanciful decoration, the gentlemen in their clean cravats and broadcloth, bland and not quite-free of the gentle association they have but left—Magruder offering his snuff-box to Captain Karne behind Sir John, who stood a trifle advanced, with his sad, round face somewhat blanched, and his hands folded in a peculiar manner over his waistcoat, as if he were nursing a telescope.

He also had not been in strict agreement with the gentleman breathing out his life before them.

Over near the other door, Mr. Daunt yet hung upon the knee of Kent ; beside him, kneeling with folded arms, the downcast Commandant of the mounted police ; and behind, standing as it were in guard upon them, the Rev. Mr. Craye, with a sort of precise, determined, unobtrusive air, as of one unmoved among the faithfulnesses of death.

Without lifting his head, Mr. Daunt suddenly said : "How indeed should the dying exact respect !"

There was a calm silence in the room.

"Who are all these gentlemen come to my grave-side," gasped he again : "Magruder, Karne, Garion, Shaxton ? By my word, Shaxton, you near pistolled me, you unfortunate man !"

Captain Shaxton pulled restlessly in the surgeon's clutch, but he said nothing, fiddling at a shirt-button, and looking at the other fixed and depressed.

"We are all here, Mr. Daunt, brotherly men," said the Governor, gently ; "come to learn how to take and face the end of it. God give us all a brave station or a quiet anchorage."

"In the calm eye of heaven," said Mr. Craye.

Daunt beckoned for the glass of medicine, and Captain Garion lifted it to his mouth.

"Ah," gasped he, nodding his white face slowly up at Franklin's, "and half the nobility too, it seems. Quite a memorable scene for Hobarton. I breathe, sir, with trouble. . . . The old rat-hole sways like a tar-boat !"

The medicine seemed to act soothingly upon him. He breathed with less agitation and less harshly.

"What a pretty speech, gentlemen," he gasped, speaking more otiose, his chin sinking into his cravat, "that about the 'calm eye of Heaven'—as pretty a thing as ever I heard! I suppose our friend Craye says these pretty things by kindly practice. . . . Sir John Franklin" (swaying for an instant upright), "Commandant Daunt wishes to speak. He makes an urgent request—an urgent—a very urgent request——"

The Governor immediately advanced, stooping beside the dying man in his free, sad, athletic way. He waited thus in silence, and then as Daunt, with his sunken head, seemed unable to do more than make his breath, he pressed him with the quiet question: "Come, Mr. Daunt, will you not convey to me your wish?"

There the Commandant leant on Kent's knee, his grave eyes downward, trying as it were to stay his sight upon some point—to steady and regulate his breath sufficiently to pass his words. He gave a faint nod of his head, saying at last: "I have, sir—I have a something on my mind—something urgent—urgent—something which should be known to some one . . . to . . ."

His labouring breath again mastered his speech, and he began again his stern struggle for utterance. "Who is this person, Mr. Daunt?" asked Sir John Franklin. "Is it woman or man? Is the man present among these men?"

The Commandant shook his head. He raised his impressive face (in which the determined spirit seemed to rule even the might of death), rolling his eyes for one sharp instant over the half-distinct figures before window and door. "I wish," he said, in a low voice, "I request that the prisoner—Sir William Heans—now under police guard below—be quickly brought before me—that I may inform him of something—before all—something deeply to his advantage."

So speaking, the gentleman's lips shaped a little racked smile, and he sank fully back upon the breast of Kent, his head sunk, his sharp face staring down. All in the little room heard what he said, and there was no need for Sir John's repetition to Garion of the Baronet's name. Those who knew of the fatal struggle in the caves were considerably startled and surprised at the announcement that poor Daunt wished to communicate some knowledge to Heans' advantage, naturally connecting it with that affair, and waiting with amazement for some revelation containing new evidence. Mr. Daunt was a close man. He had kept this matter to himself during the earlier deliberations in the reception-room. Death had surprised him, or Death made things seem more important. Now that he was dying, he was made uneasy by the possession of some private knowledge.

Of course there was the other affair. The prisoner had been a sort of fourth party in the Daunt-Shaxton quarrel. Was Mr.

Daunt about to make some public reparation to Shaxton and Heans? If this was so, Shaxton himself did not seem to welcome it. Those who looked at Shaxton noted that the other's words had filled his depressed stare with a sort of wild protest. Captain Shaxton was plainly uneasy. He stood staring over; and wincing as the surgeon worked on his arm. Had he heard from Mr. Daunt the full tale of the red-coat's end? Of what, then, was he jealous in such a generous announcement—containing a promise of yet better testimony for the character and motive of the prisoner? It was natural that few took open notice of him or seemed to observe his unsatisfactory air. His position was invidious. He was overhung with the disgrace of his act. His opinion—if he had one—was not encouraged beyond his trembling lips.

Magruder and Charles Oughtryn, on the contrary, may have thought Mr. Daunt felt he had been careless in arranging for the appointment of the file (if it was his), and was about to make some confession to that effect.

Oughtryn's demeanour, could we have watched it, would not have been the least interesting in the room. In the background of the picture, as he was, he was in the foreground in knowledge. His house had been the scene of strange relationships. He had seen, in prudence, his fears materialize—till he himself took up his weapon. To what purpose! His 'gentleman' and the soldier had come to ends from which he and his 'poor shrinkable miss' had tried to guard them. We can see the old master—in his best to his jack-boots—his eyes on the breathless Commandant with a pale, blind, feyly-apprehensive air. All night, his inward thoughts had been paining his private heart, but he had erected a sort of stunned and even mildness, which would pass for geniality in a person of wide and somewhat hazy duties. Upon this fixed and daunted surface, the dying request of the Superintendent had fallen like a pallid thunderstroke. What was this he must tell the prisoner to his face?

As the gentlemen hurried the matter through, Oughtryn backed open the door and stood waiting in the bedroom. A whisper passed from those in the doorway against warning Sir John of Heans' fatal violence, and Magruder, drawing Garion aside, bade him specially apprise the prisoner that the Governor—though he might address him—as yet knew nothing of the occurrence. Daunt's words might reveal nothing to disturb his Honour further with. Garion and Karne were despatched downstairs, and Oughtryn, the old master, to guide them.

Sir John Franklin remained in earnest counsel with Magruder, their backs to the light. Here, as they waited, the Governor pressed several questions concerning Sir William Heans' post in the household upon the other, who answered them with a grave particularity. There they were, at once watching Mr. Daunt's condition and whispering in concert, when steps were heard in

the passage. Sir John moved a few feet east of the door, drawing the other with him by the arm. It was a solemn moment, and the faces of the six gentlemen, in their pleasant, conventional attire, were shadowed with a troubled expectation.

Garion entered first, and then Oughtryn, and after him Sir William Heans. The latter leant upon a cane, holding himself pretty well, if somewhat sad. He was neatly groomed and carried one hand behind him. His slow, fixed eye met Shaxton's ruffling, unquiet stare, and then travelled to the figure of Daunt.

Sir John Franklin, touched by something changed in the man's face, moved back and whispered, "Go forward, sir. There is good news in it, so we are promised. This poor gentleman is passing, and perhaps we may look for new and fresh opportunity for Mr. Heans in his farewell words." Sir William looked fixedly at his humane face, saying, "I would, sir, that what you outline for my fate could be."

He then went forward and stood beside Daunt, his hand upon his cane.

Sir William Heans has confessed to us that his chief fear was that he should hear from Daunt that Carnt had been captured, and that all was known. He was haunted by his friend's jeopardy. His face was afraid.

It was some minutes before Captain Daunt raised his eyes. Mr. Craye, who stood at his right shoulder, stooped and whispered a word in his ear, but though his iron chin lifted a little as with his breathing, he yet stared upon the floor. At last, as if by keen struggle he had arranged the matter, he raised a wavering and dizzy stare, till it met and held upon Heans' agitated face. An instinctive look of disbelief and cynical annoyance disfigured it, into which sprang something stern and complaining; and then, as with a better thought, and as if he would have washed the ill-feeling from his face before he made his revelation, he slightly shook his head and lowered his eyelids upon a strange, sharp smile. His breath rose, became louder, quietened till it became regular. At last Mr. Craye, suspecting his calm, put a hand upon his shoulder, and found the Commandant dead.

With the gentlemen gathered in that remote room, we can but wonder what was his intention. We may choose to think with his Honour and Captain Garion that Mr. Daunt meant to act as became his station, and acknowledge to Captain Shaxton before he died that he had mistakenly traduced his wife, and credited the prisoner with the lowest of all thefts. We may think with Magruder, and possibly old Oughtryn, that Daunt was ashamed of the character of the billeted soldier, and would even have cleared Sir William Heans of his own carelessness; or go to Shaxton's extreme, unquiet and suspecting of the dead man after two engagements with him; or even feel relief with poor, sad Heans that those yet smiling lips had been unable to

announce the capture of his friends. Nay (for how could he know Carnt was in the coach at that moment?), he has as much as expressed a doubt whether Daunt knew something of their plot, and, in love with his "lightning and sunshine" to the end, would have thus authoritatively disclosed and stopped them. To these fevered accusations let us add our private contribution: that if he knew their plans, it were the better revenge upon the one to have permitted the two other parties to go free. . . . Indeed, that he expired with a look of hate upon his face may seem to some that he died according to his will and intention at the end, even in the manner of his silent death.

We may think with any one of these. Or we may think with the Government Surgeon that Commandant Daunt must have been painfully ignorant of his interior. Or with Karne and Kent—here was a fine bitter man caught by Death.

Or, with Mr. Craye, we may pray unmoved above the pretty murmur of the music.

* * * * *

So we see the night ended rather tragically. Yet it was a beautiful morning: the sea death-silent, without a sound of wave or wind. A cool watery moon and stars. The cup of the sky so remote over the clear dark it could hardly be seen. . . . Some appointed guardian, we are told, walking early about the empty house—for even Oughtryn and the woman were elsewhere—was touched at the sight of the native woman, Conapanny, seated, with her rush-bags round her, under a window near the door.

She seemed to know the old house was empty.

BOOK III

LOW WATER OF SPRING TIDES



CHAPTER I

A VIGNETTE IN AN OLD "KEEPSAKE"

ON December 2nd, 1842, a sad feeling was caused in Hobarton by the news that the prisoner Heans had either escaped or been lost in the forests about Port Arthur.¹ The news was semaphored from mountain to mountain over that extraordinary sea of trees in the way of particular tidings from and to the prison, whether you were to be informed of a death, or, being a guest of the Commandant, summoned the tramway. A feeling almost of shock hung over many who remembered his mounted figure or in whose minds the death at his hands and the comparative clemency which had been accorded him were still a matter of interest. "Shock"—because the words "lost in the forests" indicated that the search had been abandoned, leaving awash the poor word "escaped" with too heavy a cargo of grey chance for it to float upon the fingers even of romantic hope. Nay, it was there but to stigmatise the poor attempt. There was something infinitely pathetic in a man of his station and gallant bearing, his once elevated position in society, his refined care of his person to the last, lost, wandering, exposed, caught, dead, in that scarce-penetrable ring of mighty and extraordinary growths.

We believe there are still to be read some moving regrets and decent moralizing in and out of print upon his "melancholy fate."

Some five years after, it was reported in Hobarton that he was living in the French seaport town of Dieppe. This strange story was generally discredited. Again a few years later the story was repeated; it was stated he was alive and living in France. But it was not until his demise in the year of the Franco-Prussian War that the rumour of his survival was privately confirmed.

The manner of his escape from that notorious and romantic prison has remained for many reasons a mystery. How comes a man of his physique and gentle nurture to be numbered among the few who succeeded? Hobarton did not know. We believe there were stories. We believe there was one whisper of collusion

¹ Second-sentence prison.

among the authorities, at which those of the authorities who were still living laughed heartily.

How did he penetrate the wooded mountains which rampart it and its lake-like port? How did he feed himself in the forests without gun or arms? How did he find his way where not a few had tried? . . . where even the Commandant of the Settlement once lost himself and was recovered on his back?

Sir William Heans has left a brief record of his arrival at the Settlement; of his rough passage in the cutter with some fellow-prisoners; of his feeling of despondency—of fear—at the thought that he was approaching the forbidding prison upon which he had heard so many animadversions; of the foreboding he felt as they beat in among the goblin mountains; of his agreeable surprise as they rounded Dead Island at its pretty red stones; and of his amazement as they sailed into the bay at the “haven-like village out of Goldsmith, backed by a tall English spire.”

The place had been laid out for a Naval Arsenal, and had not a few beautiful buildings in the Renaissance Roman, strictly pure, and formed from freestone cut in blocks from a quarry behind the village. The church, an Abbey in size, was a sort of pinnacled Gothic, crowned with a towering Gothic spire. Following a general gentleness of colouring, even the Penitentiary, if of plainer pattern, was built of a beautiful pink brick, and placed low on the lawn of the cove, the jetties along its front lapped by the still arm of a ramparted and foliaged sea much resembling the landscape of Loch Lomond. Perhaps the mountains were a trace too weird and goblin in shape, too close and darkly massed with trees. Perhaps there were three blow-flies for every common house-fly found elsewhere. Perhaps the beautiful harbour was too full of a strangling seaweed. Standing by the church, you saw the Roman town, reared and staircased five houses up on the south hillock, terminating in the Commandant's French villa poised in its hanging garden over the sea (into which sprang a staircase of stone like that we read of in *The Mermàid*), with below in front, the pink Penitentiary, just seen down by the little water and the isles, through thirteen years' growth of English and Australian trees.

The prison of Port Arthur was like a vignette in an old “Keepsake.” . . . Looking thus eastward out of the cove fair over the bay or loch—over Dead Man's Isle, which lies in the middle like Ellen's Isle on Loch Katrine—looking out across the bay and up over the towering mountains beyond, you will see where Sir William Heans made his escape, and its direction from the prison. We have now to tell how he broke new ground, and how it occurred.

The peninsula on which Port Arthur is situated may be roughly likened to a pear, its flower being Port Arthur, its stalk the Neck at Eaglehawk, which alone connects it with the main-

land. A few celebrated escapes were accomplished along the Hobarton Road from the flower to the stalk, the prisoner swimming over, braving the dogs, soldiers, and sharks which watched it. Except by the stalk, how could any one escape from the pear? This road was the one accredited chance of a private pardon—the one opening to good health and practical despair—the others (the pitiful rafts and the roamings in the bush) were but the circlings of the disordered about the bower of the *Belle Dame sans Merci*. Heans, however, ignoring the stalk, penetrated from the flower at an acute angle from the road fair through the forests eight miles across to the Eastern coast—seeking that rugged indent known as Waterfall Bay. Looking out from Port Arthur, we see that to reach the hills he must have somehow crossed the water or rounded the arm to the north. Which did he do? How did he outwit the Commandant's sleuth-hounds? How, when he had crossed, did he reach the bay without food, water, or a guide?

As the reader may have guessed, it could hardly have been accomplished but in one way, with the help of the guide of Pacificator Robinson, Conapanny, the native woman.

* * * * *

Only a few days before, the Commandant (the famous Captain Booth) had made the remark to Heans, as they were standing on the wharves, that he would do much better to take his parole. He (Heans) had taken sensibly to the work and life; but the oath would open something better to him. The grim man sententiously recommended it. You cannot manage a town of grim clever men without being a grim clever man. This was a grim clever man. Heans, before he descended into the whale-boat which was to row him to his clerking at Point Puer, had received the advice very favourably, requesting only a few days to think it over. While it would seemingly bind himself against himself; turn the prison key a final irrevocable turn; he knew as he raised his face in the cup of the hills, this was a mere impression of his mind, and it would mean, as the Commandant hinted, another kind of turn in a door or two of the walled town above.

He was momentarily a little shocked when one evening he heard from the boatswain of the whale-boat that a Captain Shaxton was in the place, and had lodgings in the Governor of Tasmania's Cottage over past the church. Government Cottage was a little carven house on which much pains had been lavished, even to biblical bas-relief. It lay secluded beyond the avenue, with its garden and its fountain. It was known Shaxton was the author of the new form of "silent treatment," and had come to superintend the laying of the lower courses of his prison. It was supposed he was a stern fellow. Heans heard and saw nothing more of him till one evening about six o'clock, when he received

a summons from Captain Booth saying that Captain Shaxton would be very glad to see him, and asking him to step over to the Commandant's villa.

Captain Booth had given a favourable account of Heans, said he was very civil, and had kept his address; and Shaxton said he would like just to see how he was—he didn't care about speech—before he went back. He would be glad to give a decent account of him to his cousin. It was a pleasant night and they were walking on the green point beyond the garden. The Commandant said—with some deprecations from Shaxton—he would ask Sergeant Dore, in whose cottage Heans now had a chamber, to bring him to the gate, and they could take a turn above the water.

Booth seemed to consider Shaxton a seasoned enough old fellow, not to be frightened by much, while Shaxton was hardening himself up that he might not be shocked by the sight of Heans. When they heard the sentry clattering at the gate (a pretty carriage-gate with stone pillars) and a tall figure walked through, he was glad to see it was Heans himself, in a second-class suit of smooth cords, a sort of collar, and that sort of clever cravat which tries to hide a linenless shirt. No cane. No glass. No gloves. A black peaked cap a little rain-loosed.

The Commandant went up into the veranda, taking the sergeant with him; while Heans, with a look or two about him as if he were rather blind, walked slowly through the garden to the place where Shaxton was standing with his grinning face towards him.

Shaxton remained in that curious position, looking at him hard and doubting, till he came quite close, reminding him of his way of going for Daunt in his room. He seemed half-moved, half-inimical. When they shook hands, he made a great noise, laughing too much. He was strange. He turned gropingly away and put out his hand, however, indicating the sward and inviting Heans to a turn. Not a word did they say for a while, Shaxton stooping a great deal and once only appraising, with a chuckle and a beckon of his arm, the Island of the Dead, and the island-like spit of Point Puer with its lights in the water.

Shaxton asked what sort of life he had of it here. Heans told him, "not so bad: a great deal of clerking work, some choir singing, a little fishing with the commissary-general, a hand at cards with a few of the military—a system sharp, energetic, clever, chilly—distinctly chilly to two old club-men like yourself and me, Shaxton!"

Captain Shaxton concealed great agitation. He was much hipped at seeing how little he was really altered. He thought to himself, "The old seemly reserve; the eye just a little duller, just a bit more fixed; the man might do it, he could do it." In the quiet evening, in this twilight place miscalled a prison, amid the night noises of little birds, he and poor imprisoned Heans walked

quietly, his throat sore yet with its old wrong the while he sought words by which he might give way to the persuasions of his wife. Twice had Heans endeavoured to abscond, the first time with the secret aid of Matilda. Again she would join with others in getting Heans away, and he (Shaxton) was actually here with the discretion of the thing and the very message in his mouth.

He wore a cloak over his evening dress and a low castor hat. His lips, as he eyed the bay, had an underhung and fateful smile.

"What a scene, Heans," says he, with an awed sort of chuckling, "for a duel in the play, an affair between gentlemen, interrupted by the lady-heroine?"

"Would you interrupt it, Shaxton?" says Heans.

"Heans, I am not the tragedy man," said Shaxton. "I'm the old fellow who does the kind heart."

"Well, you can't fight me, sir," said Heans.

"Ho-ho, no," said Shaxton, "not you and me, Heans."

How difficult to do! How difficult to decide! It was with him entirely whether he should give or keep his monstrous message. It was for him to judge if these remnants of Sir William were to be trusted with it, whether they were equal to making use of it when heard. It would never be done if he shut his mouth; his faithless, dishonourable mouth. It was with him to withhold a treachery or give. With him to muddle, mar, miscommit, destroy the man's steadiness, give him great news, uncover a strange chance, fling back the lock to a shocking and remarkable opening—or leave him to this (him, poor ceremonious fellow!)—this kind of a collar, this unseemly self-attention, these malformed clothes, these shoes, this cravat from which a fellow peeped aside!

The sea lifted without wave and swept inward about the garden—inward to the wharves. He had not committed himself to anything. He had not given any promise that he would disclose anything to Heans. "Life's brief," he thought. "Like the great sea-weed down there, we surge or bob up for our gasp of indifferant air, and sway secretly away!" Poor Heans might play out his comical piece here as well as elsewhere; and be buried perhaps in yonder Island Cemetery; and leave the Shaxton mouth to a few "civil enquiries": to the pleasant thing here in the garden from him to a prisoner of the prison.

His wife's voice touched him.

Booth stood on the high steps of the veranda in conversation with Sergeant Does. They could hear his sharp, roused protests. As little did he (Booth) think there was a chance of skedaddling for the poor old beau as he dreamed of his swimming the Neck itself, or the architect of the Model Prison being tampered with or tampering with him. No, Hyde-Shaxton that night was the last man to help a prisoner to abscond. The very last man in the prison.

The same air, so self-contained, so pathetically *bon ton*!

What a fate—what a fate!

His God, no . . . not the cravat; not the Government shoes; not this erection of gentility in burlesque; not these hills, Hyde-Shaxton, for the old fellow who gave it up for the blind young girl! We suppose Shaxton called himself a humane man, though he did design a prison. We suppose he excused himself as a humane man. It is the more uncomfortable, uncommon form of being weak—except with ourselves. Presently, half-chuckling it out—nay, begging him to do it—he communicated there almost without warning the planning that was offered for his escape.

"Is there any way by which you could find yourself outside these walls, besides this kind of thing?" says he.

Heans asked what he meant.

Says he: "Would the *Emerald* eight miles over those mountains be any use to you, Heans? Could you make use of her—could you reach her?"

"I take it you are in earnest; you do not lightly say it?" Heans said.

"No, I don't. Be sharp!"

In the first dark flush, Heans "believed he could—it was germane to his feelings—he thought so."

"Could you do it with the old guide, Conapanny, to meet you, feed you, and take you across?"

In the first pale flash, "Yes, sir, but how would Conapanny pass the gut at Eaglehawk?"

"She is prepared for that. Indeed, of what could they suspect the black if they caught her?"

"My Heaven, that is so!" said Heans.

After some talk Sir William Heans satisfied Captain Shaxton his part in it was feasible. They came to an agreement while yet quietly at their paces. Shaxton swore it would be the end of them all if he saw Heans again, and asked how he had best communicate with him, when, by lack of report, Conapanny might be safely said to have passed the Neck. Both he and Heans agreed that the church was the best medium, and Shaxton volunteered the suggestion that his wife would shortly visit the prison in his company and that her presence in the church (and hers alone) would be the warning that the black had gone out upon her journey, and had had time to arrive at a point on the hill opposite the settlement. Her actual arrival at that point would be made known to Heans by a forest fire started on a hot day on the summit of the hills towards the Neck.¹ Shaxton,

¹ Those dwelling in Australian cities are often overhung by these summer conflagrations started by no ascertainable cause. Two of these at different periods have swept Port Arthur and reduced it to ruins.

moreover, asked for some distinct place at which Conapanny could await Heans' escape from the town, and Heans bade him inform her to take the line between Dead Island and the Signal Station on Mount Arthur, and to keep well up from the water in case by some accident he failed to hide his track. He believed there was no danger of their searching any way but to the Neck.

He promised to obey the old native's directions how to hide his path.

The plan put forward had originated with poor, dilatory Stiff, being financed by somebody who was nameless (sentiment will say the Earl of Daisley), and been communicated through Mr. Six to the Oughtryn household—I fear from certain signs Oughtryn himself was not quite unaware of it—and from blind Abelina on her sick-chair to Mrs. Shaxton, who was in the habit of sitting beside her. The surprise and disgust occasioned by the absconding of Madam Ruth with a clerk of the Cascades Prison—a mere prisoner like herself—Oh woman! woman! you are all alike! what a prosaic end to the strange romance!—while it lost Leete his appointment at Port Arthur, was nothing to the disgust of Captain Stiff when the phantom schooner at the mouth of the Tamar took off only Mr. Jarvis Carnt and the half-fainting figure of the artist of the Cascades. True, the fog, or the weeds on his hull, or his indifferent seamanship, had delayed Stiff till the rowers in the boat had all but mutinied and threatened to pull home or land and leave their besodden and despairing cargo in the sun under the beacon. True, Mr. Carnt had made them understand “never” for any other man was “vulgarly early” for the captain of this schooner, and he would prefer some other way of getting dry. True, the ship got the two poor wraiths it did only by a chance of mistiness and calm which kept the day in its bed and winged a late hail to reach a woman's ears. Stiff would neither accept admonishment nor be pleased with his success. On this matter we dare to state nothing more than the fact that he either borrowed or moved some one of means sufficiently (perhaps by his very despondency) to allow him funds with which to procure stores and a new sail, and attended to another matter connected with his two years' agreement with Sir William Heans. Though shocked by the news conveyed by his boy that Heans was now a prisoner at Port Arthur, this did not deter him from offering his services. The details of the affair which led to that segregation spurred him to a fresh effort of patience, while the mild form of Sir William's sentence strengthened him in the belief that the liberation of that gentleman was not outside the power of the contracting party.

He would never have brought his ship so close to Hobarton, perhaps, if Mr. Daunt had been alive. He had had a great respect for what Mr. Daunt might possibly know. But Mr. Daunt, as we know, had died suddenly during an entertainment in

Hobarton at the house of the old farmer-prisoner. There, also, during the identical day, Sir William Heans had attacked and killed a soldier, though he saved, with his undoubted dislike, the daughter from worse than death. He was always a man for the ladies! We curtail the story as Stiff considered it. On general evidence, especially that of a native, the soldier had been proved to be a dangerous, threatening man, though through an unlucky question by the police magistrate, just when the black seemed inclined to be communicative, she had been reduced to a weeping and impenetrable silence. She seemed to admit knowledge of the man in her childhood, that he had always been a 'bad wite,' and that she had had a lover who was a prisoner in the caves in the days of Governor Collins, whom the man had hated if he had not actually brought him to his death; but when asked if she was willing to commit the hand of her lover as being in any way connected with the death of Governor Collins, she grew indignant, laughed, cried, contradicted all her previous evidence and at once reduced herself, or was reduced, to a babbling incoherency from which nothing was able to arouse her. Nay, if she had admitted she was in the caves on the night of that Wednesday, she laughed when asked if Spafeld removed the remnants of a body from the stable, and was a hewn statue of silence when they asked if she knew where the body was buried. For the rest, the old farmer had already warned the authorities of ill-will between the servant and the soldier, requesting the latter's removal from his house. The suspicion lay on the soldier and the blame on the authorities (as they admitted), if Heans' excuse for his concealment in the stable as hiding from the man in the hope that he would presently go out was not accepted in some quarters. Oughtryn's sick daughter, herself, seemed doubtful why Heans was in hiding in the caves, unless he wished to avoid the man—or unless he was, as he rather unconnectedly implied, "examining the cracks." It was Stiff himself who communicated to the Oughtryn household the fact that Heans had been endeavouring to escape, and so it was made plain what he had resigned (so we have it) to these few.

How far Oughtryn was involved we hesitate to say. How far, or by what inducement, he was moved out of his caution towards so grim an enterprise—who shall decide? Possibly he had an inkling from the first what his 'gentleman' had been about in the crack; possibly he had had much thought upon the point and his not immediately crying out for help—which were explained when he heard of the near presence of the escapees in the carriage. Heans had struggled with death itself to hide his interrupted enterprise and save a hubbub for a half an hour. If he had succeeded in breaking out of the stable, Spafeld would scarcely have summoned the police to confront the story on the girl's chill lips. Poor, precise young miss! did she manage, lying so pale there in her chair, with about her curious pots of

Wandering Jew and Ragged Betty, cherry pie, Macquarie Harbour vine, love, bay—was it she who worked these wonders upon her Conapanny and her puzzled, scolding parent; did she produce a prudent argument; was it she, "poor chit," who among these frightened counsellors, these "fair-weather friends," voiced the final appeal; was it she who (though addressing one who had no "liking for such proceedings") fluttered about the quiet room the most "obscure" yet the most speaking reason?

* * * * *

Thus Captain Shaxton's was the mouth which chose and uttered the words which showed Heans that mysterious path; which, considering his stern business there, and considering what these gentlemen had known of one another, was a strange weapon to be put at his will, and used in a way as becoming to his warmth of heart, as it was unseemly to his cloth. It cannot be said that he owed Heans this debt. On the contrary, from all we can hear, things between them were hardly even yet—never quite even—sir or madam! There was something even forbearing and showing quite a kind and philosophical outlook in this old fellow. There he went, chuckling and shrugging at the powerful smooth-belted tide in his black cloak and spotless breeches. As for Sir William Heans, he had great difficulty in mastering his emotion. As he says in his description of the interview to Sir Charles, "what with the shock of it, what with the something touching in the old fellow's breaking in and saying it, and the oppression on his spirits, there in the private garden, the Commandant in his very veranda, he had a dismaying struggle to retain an appearance of uneasy resignation."

The audacity of it—the unlikeliness of it!

When the conversation of Captain Shaxton and the prisoner began to flag a little, they forsook the water and began to return over the grass towards the villa. The garden was beautifully secluded by its fringing of trees above the Penitentiary and the wharves. Booth seemed to see suddenly that Shaxton wished to be relieved, for he advanced down the steps to meet them, sending the sergeant to the gate. Captain Booth, so they say, was a sharp, clever man. Shaxton met him with a rather rueful chuckling, as from one with whom a trying interview was nearly accomplished. "We two old fellows were glad of a word, Commandant. Many thanks. It makes me ashamed to find him a more resigned man than I am. Yes, I'm outgrowing it all, too, Heans. I declare I get befogged now sometimes. I feel—ho-ho—like the drunken gentleman who sought refuge in a theatre, and begged for a seat on the audience side!"

The Commandant made an "oh-ohing," and said rather harshly: "he was happy to find Sir William Heans well enough—not complaining, he was sure?"

"Not a bit of it, sir," said Captain Shaxton. "It was just like Heans to keep his head and busy himself with his work." Of

course, it was new for a man like Heans. He hoped he foresaw some more pleasant things in store for him. He believed that would come before long.

"Why, yes," Captain Booth replied, "it has been recommended to Heans that he should take his parole. This we have put before him seriously, and Heans is giving it a few days' consideration. It will mean a considerable broadening of his life. There is a hint of some horseback exercise in the direction of the Model Farm, and Mr. Lempriere, the Commissary-General, requests his interest at the Tidal Observatory on Point Puer. Just so. Here we are, hourly looking for the brief assent." He looked at Heans.

"Ah, well, I'll leave that to Heans and yourself, sir," said Shaxton, calmly. And he turned about very slowly and deliberately and went close up to Heans (close to that comical article of apparel about the erect neck) and spoke in a low voice some confidential words to him, and said "Good-night," shaking his hand warmly and chuckling ruefully. As for Heans, he made a rather sad little *congé*, raising his cap off his white hair, and moving off a little reserved, putting his hand up against the bars of the gate as he went out in that rather blind way. Shaxton never thought of that moment without a shudder, as Heans strode off with the soldier down the umbrageous lane, with behind them the beautiful tower of the Powder Magazine, so classic in the gloom-light it might have come stone for stone from the Capitol or the Appian Way.

CHAPTER II

THE ABBEY IN THAT FAR COVE

Booth's importunity apart, the thing, when he came to consider it move by move, was not so easy. It was comforting to be able to say: the appearance of Matilda Shaxton at church one afternoon—a glow of fire on the mountains—then eight miles (or double that) across the forests—and his part at Port Arthur was played; there yet remained the breakage from the prison, which, though not dangerous, was not pleasing to dwell upon. As he thought it over it became less and less so. Out of three or four outlets which he had outlined to Shaxton, he had chosen with Shaxton's approval the safest—perhaps the only certain way. At the weekly choir practice, it had been a habit of kindness in the Chaplain to invite him to take a stroll without the north door of the church. They would walk past the Governor's Cottage, up the north knoll (where goes the road), and return. It was only a few paces, and nearly all that time they were in sight and hearing of the sentries . . . but not all. The lane inclined among the bushes to the left and to the right. Of late days, as Spring came, if the conversation became interesting, the clergyman and he would take a constitutional nearly to the top.

The Chaplain was an elderly man, with coarse grey hair and a curious sturdy, wistful smile. He did quite a lot of good in the prison, and indeed with every one. He had the wonderful gift of approaching men differently: one familiarly, another with reserve. He was something of a scholar, but his aim was elsewhere. He had no visible fault, but some were invented for him. He was good and kind, and often withheld his opinion, while listening sturdily to those which could not have been anything but painful to him. Heans' task was the one of throwing the Chaplain off his feet, gagging him, and binding his limbs. He did not look upon this as an undertaking of grave difficulty, but he could not approach it without considerable anguish of mind.

Once over the knoll, he would be in the forests, until three miles on he rounded the north arm of the Bay, and made east along the water. His plan was to make immediately for the beach and make speed along the sands; then as he neared the

north arm, or Long Bay, he would approach the Eaglehawk road and walk warily, on the *qui vive* for a late passenger-boat from the tramway, or the tramway¹ itself, which here had a terminus, and if running late would have to be circuited. He would be much aided by dark. Once round the arm and he would have nothing to watch but the central observation-house on Signal Hill, and in this lay his peculiar safety, for the direction in which he was bound was completely bare of the mountain watch-houses which dominated every other part of the Peninsula.

(He relates how by Conapanny's request he was directed how to use the road to confuse his pursuers, and also how to descend into the sea on fragments of tree bark.)

Heans, though his singing voice has been described as passable, if inconsistent, was still vain of it, and was eventually persuaded by the Chaplain to make one of the singers in the Port Arthur choir. To enable him to attend practice, he was granted the countersign every Wednesday, and walked in the evening down Punishment Steps, out of the gate, along the wharves, through the Doric gateway of the avenue (you can see, even now, the pillars lying in the grass), and up the avenue to the church. This beautiful building was of unusual form, having two immense wings running north and south in which sat the prisoners, and between, a shorter nave, entered from the tower, having at the west end a chancel and large window. It was of hewn stone. In the nave were high wooden pews for prison-officers and guests, some of them curtained, while on transverse seats before the chancel was the choir, and on the right a wooden pulpit of the kind called "three-decker." The seats of the prisoners slanted upward to the rear. During the service there was a sentry without the tower, and one outside both the doors in the wings, and the church was locked.

The Wednesday practice was attended by four determined constables, three high-singing privates in the military, seven good-conduct men in grey, two ancient fellows with cultivated voices and moulting airs, as steely, forgotten, and proud as two old ravens, a chanting Stipendiary, no less a person than the Deputy-Assistant-Commissary-General, and a quiet fellow, fellow-baritone to Heans, whom he understood to be one of the officers' servants. The choir was unsurplised, those with uniforms appearing in them, the two old fellows in their grey prison smocks, for they were Imperial Paupers, or invalids. There was no organ. The service was Wesleyan. The Psalms were pleasantly and finely chanted.

A fortnight after Shaxton's visit, the weather again moderated, and the clergyman stopping Heans after "practice," they had a few words and afterwards took a turn up the knoll. The old

¹ Prisoner-propelled trucks to meet a more sheltered ship-route.

man's monosyllabic talk, and his after-work air, sturdy and polite, if somewhat lost in private anxiety, touched Sir William Heans sufficiently to render him silenter than usual, drawing from the other a tentative enquiry after his affairs and spirits, which he choked off with cackles and shrugs about the weather. They continued to talk concerning the climate, comparing the vanished winter with that of Westmorland. They had some words also on the writings of S. Paul and the craft and cunning of his arguments, by which he must have appealed to the crafty cunning man of many ages. The knoll up which they paced had been once cleared of scrub, but it was once more thinly overgrown, and there were places in the road (as Sir William looking back, perceived) where they walked a few paces completely hidden from the Settlement. The ground was soft and sandy. Heath was budding among the coral fern by the wayside. It was difficult to believe, as he walked spasmodically talking in the grey evening, that after that wonderful and terrible experience on a coming Sunday, that last sight of the beautiful face he yet loved, he must come to interfere with the person of this old man; that through a violent action from him, the seamed and wistful countenance at his shoulder must change to amazement, alarm, dislike, upbraiding, reproach. How would he bring himself to it? After what fairness of argument, unselfish sturdiness of interest, or wistful silence of disagreement, would he turn upon and grapple with him? Better here near the top, not far from the fringe of bracken. He supposed the Chaplain would struggle and bravely wrestle him off, elderly as he was, and sedentary as was his habit. It must be done sharp; the mouth, now anxious, gagged; the arms, now persuasively raised in gesticulation, bound! "Shall you, sir, revenge yourself as you sometimes do, with a wilful stare as you lie in the sand; and I, sir, with a salute upon your upbraiding face?"

So Sir William thought as he went out and returned into the prison. In the ensuing weeks he often looked across the cove, sharply examining the church and knoll. Portions of the road were visible from Dore's cottage and he saw that every precaution must be exercised, and every outing with the Chaplain utilized for strict measurement, precaution, and observation. From the same window, Dore's house being high, he could see part of Dead Island and the hills behind which Stiff would soon be hanging. He often stared long and narrowly at these extraordinary forests, and those swathing the northern heights of Signal Hill, placing in anticipation on this bosom or that a sudden flash and jet of flames, and too experienced in the accidents of life to be able to credit, without moments of despondency and scepticism, the extraordinary promise of a few friends.

("Ah, Scarning," says he, in writing to that gentleman, "it seems now a matter for the elegant fireside; for a smile over

Plutarch in my smoking cabinet or abroad in the coverts of our dear French pleasance; but place yourself with however good a friend in that valley of athletic sceptics, whose attitude of life it was to suspect the fingers of a closed hand, and something of my suspense and cynicism will be yours.”)

October had gone and November had just begun, and Heans had heard nothing more of Shaxton, though indeed along outside the walls below the Hospital, the foundations of the Model Prison were rising out of the ground. For all he knew Shaxton might be in the town or out. Each Sunday, during the two services (at eleven and three), he snatched, through a pair of spectacles he had of late procured, a secret survey of the pews in the nave. He knew with strict accuracy what persons inhabited the nearer seats, and was aware instinctively, and a few moments after the service had begun, if there was a change, and what. Shaxton, if he ever appeared, if he were not so placed, would endeavour to place himself in a conspicuous position. There was a gap of a few feet between the choir and congregation, while the first three pews on either side—that the prisoners in the wings might view the chancel—were uncurtained. In the third of these on the north of the aisle sat the Commandant and one of the military officers, while in the pew behind, half of which was curtained at back and side, Mrs. Booth and an ancient lady sat with three young children. The three pews behind and the four opposite these across the aisle were curtained in a similar manner; moreover, the persons of the few worshippers in the rearmost of these were visible to Heans only when they were on their feet. Here was a black wig, there a beflowered, there a beaver bonnet. He knew them all well enough.

Sir William had begun to look about him in the broadening summer, and doubt both his courage and craft against the pressing of the parole. He had not again been personally approached by Booth, but in three or four situations he caught upon himself that sharp, uneasy gaze. Also it had been conveyed to him by Sergeant Dore that Sir John Franklin on his late visit to the prison had made enquiries about him and had been relieved to hear how “good were his prospects.” Despite of this he had made every preparation and taken every precaution to meet his friends’ communication; he had fixed upon a spot where he could come to grimmer hand-grips with the clergyman; he had snatched a view of the beach from the top of the knoll; he was even now secreting large supplies of Mrs. Dore’s broad beans. And here it was—a dream seemingly—an insincere civility—the warm-hearted and exaggerated offer of too kind enthusiasm!

One Sunday afternoon, a week after the visit of the Governor of Tasmania to Government Cottage, when both Church services had been distinguished by the presence of Franklin in the pew.

beside the Commandant, and that of her Ladyship beside the Commandant's wife, when the Settlement was suffering something of a reaction after the fine comings and goings, and Heans himself regaining courage after the sinking of spirits occasioned by the sight of the great explorer who had again benevolently touched his life—on this, a fine warm day, he noted, as the congregation assembled, that the officer seated by Captain Booth had an unwonted broadness in his build, and raising his face, he saw that it was Captain Shaxton. For a second or two he dropped his eyes, endeavouring to collect his perturbed senses. When he had quieted his distress, in a sideways flutter of the eyelids, he saw seated in her Ladyship's place against the red curtain behind, a figure in a brown bonnet with averted head.

The service had not yet begun. The chimes were yet pealing over the harbour. The army of prisoners had filed two and two up the avenue, split at the tower, and wound in single file into each door of the wings, which it now filled. There they sat, to the front the men in grey, and sloping higher that all might see and be seen, they with one black and one yellow sleeve, and highest and furthest back those in Lifer's yellow. On the chest of each a great P. A. The prison officers and their women filled the body of the church. The keys had been shot in the doors. Within, thirty soldiers stood to their guns against the tower. The Chaplain sat in the pulpit, looking thoughtfully before him, waiting yet to rise and pray.

Minute after minute—yet it seemed as if nothing would turn the brown bonnet in the curtained pew. There was a long prayer softly but penetratingly spoken. A loud, deep psalm was chanted—psalm of scaffolds and arenas, the Twenty-fifth Psalm: 'Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed.' The Bible was read. Another long prayer. Still the lady in brown in the chocolate bonnet had not turned her head. She had arisen, seated herself, and bowed herself in prayer, but only one gleam of a cheek as pale as the feather of that straw poke showed above the high wooden pew. It seemed as though she were trying to lose herself in the reading and the prayer. Sir William Heans, as he sang in his stiff way under the great window, his book elevated, glanced at her again and yet again out of the corner of his spectacles.

He could not be certain. Nay, he did not think that it was. He believed no woman would do so strange a thing! He did not expect it of that lady. But if—if possibly it was Mrs. Shaxton sitting there—what joy, what inexpressible relief and gratitude! Think—the black somewhere up upon those hills outside; the schooner and poor Captain Stiff actually beating in under the cliffs beyond! Before God—to whom this sanctuary belonged—let them have prudence! Nay, it was not she. This person's form was slighter.

Perhaps the poor young lady was oppressed with the distracting differences of this place of worship? But she must look about her soon. She would not go through the whole service in that still spirit. What is her face like? Is it old or young, sour or soft with pretty hope? Is she perhaps a very beautiful young woman? Has she dark hair—fair hair? What a pity she is so reserved!

A lady exposed to such a thing! Well, well, in these days we may wonder at it! It is a most singular story. In cold narrative it sounds rather an audacious feat of cool endurance. To be locked in that church with such a secret! As we walk now through the roofless ruin, and endeavour to reseat the wild-hearted lady in her pew, with only the book-rest between herself and Commandant Booth: her husband's back before her: as we endeavour to repicture the slim figure of Matilda Shaxton, stooping forward as she sits, a brown mantle about her shoulders, the renowned Commandant just in front, and beside him that humane and guilty inconsistent, Captain Shaxton, somewhat drooping-mouthed, depressed, and singing glumly—to rehear the rustle of massed humanity, to think the thought of this and that, to think the precarious hope in the brains of the three whose story we have followed, to listen to the remote determined reader in the pulpit: "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly"—attempting to picture it, we are not altogether comfortable with the knowledge of how little the most clever, most omniscient officer present had any reason to connect the presence of Captain Shaxton's lady in the church with the accident that happened afterwards to the once-fashionable, now pathetic figure at the back of the choir. It was probably thought that Captain Shaxton did not know she would be confronted by Sir William Heans in the chancel when he brought his wife to the afternoon service. Then people alter so, and perhaps she did not remember him. But, if it was not known if she knew her old beau or not (for she made no effort to speak with him), it was supposed by some, who perhaps were observing him too closely, that he recognised both Captain Shaxton and his wife, and even that the sight of the lady, with its reminder of the brilliant circles in which he had moved, was partially responsible for his melancholy fate.

Sir William Heans' book quivered in his hand as he sang or sat at prayer. If it was she, what unbelievable joy! But was it she? As often as he looked aside, the face of the lady was lost in her great feathered bonnet. She sat behind Commandant Booth, her head seen just past his head, Mrs. Booth and the children being on her right and the old woman on her left. She seemed instinctively to seat herself towards the pulpit. She sat erect and a little forward, her face just so slightly bowed and so averted, she did not show hair or cheek. Her neck was long and very white, and sprang

frailly from her white collar. She wore a heavy necklace of amber. During the prayers she sat very bowed—sadly or abstractedly, so the prisoner thought—and when she stood up, he could see but the top of her bonnet over the Commandant's shoulder. Sir William Heans felt a little oppressed and sceptical of the woman. Two psalms had been chanted. The Chaplain had prayed for this assemblage, and read. A hymn was sung, a stern old hymn by Sir Walter Scott. This woman still sat forward in her pew with her bonnet fallen and averted. But see, has she not a sad, wild air? Is it fancy there is something sorrowful in that cramped posture? Why is then the lady so oppressed as that impression Heans had of her in that last look? Heans—Heans—something frightens you—something has begun to beat at your heart in yearning—something pitiful and mournful tries your spirit in the look of that poor woman! O freedom, where is then your prize! O life, where is thy victory! What is there in that bowed figure against the curtain that brings persuasion who it is? Not its determination, not a visible fine high spirit of help, not a natural shrinking and fear, nay not that joyous message of gain and personal power—nay, Heans, a little ripple and tender eddy of loss.

It happened that during the following lesson the Chaplain "commended unto them" one "Phœbe," "for she hath been a succourer of many" and Heans, as he sat with his arms folded, cast round his eyes with a sort of affright and yearning. As he did so, the bonnet seemed to turn a fraction towards him, giving a faint gleam of fairish hair, and as if she knew that he was looking at her, her head fell, and then lifted with a heavy effort, sank again, lifted, and gave him the grave anguish of the face he longed for.

* * * *

Captain Shaxton wrote privately he was much hit by the sight of Heans singing away in the choir. He never forgot the old fellow standing under the window with his proud short-sighted airs, and the (ahem!) cravat. There he was among those deep-voiced, broad-shouldered choristers, piping away like the best of them. He didn't know whether to chuckle or be indignant. Perhaps the strangest jest of all was the old parson-man in the pulpit who'd befriended Heans, and had to be attacked. Captain Shaxton "never attended to a sermon so closely," he said, "nor gave such strict attention to any other clergyman." He looked at Heans, he wrote, and then he looked up at the old fellow in the pulpit, and was never so glad to find a brave little sentimental old gentleman droning out talk about "loving your neighbour as yourself," and "those who have loved another having fulfilled the law." His stature was comforting, and his text—"Oho, he liked to hear the kind old fellow saying these things."

At the close, when the doors were unlocked, prisoners and warders had filed out, the congregation gone, the soldiers tramped

away, and the choir had sole possession of the church, Sir William crept slowly out under the tower. The Chaplain, himself, was just behind him, and struck perhaps with his heavy air, he said, with that wistful smile of his: "What a beautiful evening!" Heans, walking shakily from his abstraction and looking up, perceived that the light was heavy on the buildings and cove trees. A sudden excitement caught him as he saw a new wanderer in those extraordinary forests. . . .

CHAPTER III

SIR WILLIAM JOINS THE WANDERER

THE weather culminated on that Friday after the Shaxtons' signal in a fierce hot day, and Sir William Heans in his room in the evening kept a vigilant eye on the hills, though hardly expecting the native to be yet across, and only half looking for her flaring summons so close upon Matilda's visit. He could not, however, refrain from a little despondency when the serried tiers of the forests sank unilluminated into the darkness, vanishing without a spark, nor could he altogether restrain his mind from picturing the many accidents which might have befallen the woman in those cathedralled fastnesses, or in and about the necks of East Bay and Eaglehawk. A change of weather blowing up in the night, the following day was cold, so for that occasion the precious chance of communication had gone.

On the back of this disappointment came the fellow-trouble bordering on the keen and grim. He had been set one morning some rather distasteful writing in the Punishment Offices, when along came Captain Booth's servant with a message summoning him to the Commandant's villa. With his heart in his mouth, Heans left his pen and followed the man through the archway and along the street to the gate. All the way up, and while he waited in the garden till Booth was at leisure to join him, his mind fluttered in agitation about the trouble of the parole. Week after week had passed, and here he was, without doubt, to be asked what was the result of his rather dubious deliberations for and against. How might he best again put it aside? How delay yet a few days? There was this parry, that riposte, lame enough against that keen weapon. And supposing he was unable to parry it, and Booth stripped him sudden of his play, with no defence left him—only refusal? If he found he could not give them his word? Ah, Mr. Heans, what now? What would they do with the loose string allowed, the little extraordinary freedoms, those shreds and tatters of suddenly so priceless latitude?

It was a serious moment for Sir William as he squared his shoulders and slowly paced the drive-way before the veranda. It was as beautiful a sunlit morning as you could have wished to see, the shrubs and trees lying golden and green on the sunny air, backed by grey tower, wall, and statue-crowned peak, and

the low waters making a little sound by the wharves. He does not say, in contemplating this scene, if his mind entertained, in that grave extremity, the ease which would have opened about his plot had he greeted Captain Booth with an affirmative and taken the oath there in his garden. Perhaps it is improper in us even to chronicle the temptation.

When Commandant Booth came out upon the porch and descended the steps, Heans, who had arranged his mind in some sort, came enquiringly towards him. He was by that time ready for the troublesome eventuality, and did what he could to hide his apprehensions under a calm reserve. The Commandant looked up from a paper he was reading, and wished him "Good morning" with his determined, uneasy eyes. He immediately brought the other's heart to a standstill by asking him, "how he found the place in the summer?" On Heans politely replying that it had many attractions on a morning like "this morning," the Commandant, balancing on the bottom step with the paper stretched in his two hands, and his eyes grimly hanging on Heans, made the horrible remark, that "given sufficient liberty of action, a man might find in Port Arthur as much contentment as a short life deserved." The last thing that occurred to Sir William at that instant was that the grim gentleman was himself somewhat lost in the graces of his own creation, was himself lost in personal feelings, and momentarily startled from his caution, he said, "Yes—yes—indeed, it was like a village out of Goldsmith" (had he seen it in these later days, he might with romantic accuracy have compared it to the "Deserted Village"), "and a man only needed sufficient privacy of decision to see poetry itself behind the prison." Such, however, was the case. Heans' luck seemed actually swinging over, in his favour. The Commandant was himself only enjoying the sun a little, and thinking aloud. With a flash, and a shrug of his shoulders, he summoned Heans to corroborate some items in the "register" of the Boys' Penitentiary, and grimly and thoughtfully ascended to the veranda.

Imagine Sir William Heans' relief that it didn't go any further. As he opened the gate, he whistled one of Miss Abelia's songs in the red-coat's face.

As we have said, luck seemed to be turning, for heat fell again in the following week, and Sunday broke in a suffocating sun, though with little wind. That day and night Heans' anxious eyes were constantly on the hills, but again they were unbroken by any flame or light that he could discern. Then in the morning of Monday, when rowing over to Point Puer in the whale-boat, the boatswain pointed out a small column of smoke rising from a shoulder behind Signal Hill, and expressed the opinion it was early in the year for bush fires. The day was very warm, and there was a slight breeze west and north. So remote seemed the smoke and so natural the sight, that Heans, as he sat in the stern-sheets of the six-oared vehicle, was amazed at himself,

at the quiet manner in which he observed and discussed the phenomenon. There it was faintly ballooning into the yellow-blue sky. How shocking, how difficult, in the hot and drowsy morning, to think that that dim wraith was speaking to himself. He heard the boatswain say he must hasten to the wharf, as men would be sent to aid the soldiers from Eaglehawk. He tried to see the old woman near the smoke, or climbing away from it, in this or that high cobweb of a thousand trees. No, she would not be near it; she would be remote from it before her smoke could be seen. No (and his eyes were grim with thankfulness), more than likely she was here and now watching them from the opposite shore, behind the veiling trees of the Island of the Dead, towards which they were swinging under the prisoners' oars.

That evening the whale-boat was late in calling for him at Point Puer, and he had leisure to watch from the boat-stage the far point of the fire smarting and sinking on the gloom like a damp fuse. He learned that the blaze had been signalled as making towards Port Bunche, and that a force of prisoners and soldiers had been taken off to protect the constables' houses. We fain would have presented to the reader a picture of Sir William returning to the wharves in the stern-sheets of the boat with the forests about the harbour ablaze about his head; yet as he ascended those graceful jetties which the same element has reduced to a few odd sticks, and stepped his way, past the various guarded arches, up among the towers and battlemented houses of the peopled town, he felt the very remoteness of her signal spark was the best medicine for his confidence in the guide of Augustus Robinson, and assured him the small live light at his back was the message of human hands.

This was on Monday. On Tuesday the fire was still burning in the settled heat, and on Wednesday, though the smoke ascended only at intervals, it was still engaging the men from the Settlement. Though, in view of their comings and goings by trainway, road, and boat, Heans attended the church on Wednesday without intention of making his hazard after practice that day, yet as he strolled out of the north door with the Chaplain, he experienced all the tenseness and pathos of an invitation. They paced rather exhausted up the hot road, the clergyman sturdily brushing the flies from a somewhat red yet patient countenance. Heans walked with his arms folded, and as they passed calmly gossiping from bush to bush, covert to covert, further and further up the hill, further and further from the Settlement, lost to view to this, and then to that, and then to the other pair of eyes stationed on the terraces of the town, the impatience of Sir William with all he was dropping behind, and the tug of yearning and fine, immediate offer from that which every step of his feet marshalled further about them—the impulse to seize the ghastly changes and chances for the first time possible now and on the instant, was peculiar and over-

whelming. He found his prudence thin. He found it but serviceable to remind himself that next Wednesday would see it done, and himself bursting out through all these straitened chains of chance and honour. The smell of ferns in the cooler places of the road, the spy-holes to the forest, the very subject on the lips of his companion pedestrian—the fire—constantly pulled him back to the fact that the blackwoman was here—had kindled her lurking signal in the hills. In the minds of these two gentlemen upon their evening stroll, the fire indeed was a pleasing subject of interest, but for very different reasons!

The Chaplain was reminded of a great conflagration which had swept the region of the Clyde, and the "race for life of a certain esteemed family, the ladies gently nurtured, on whom fortune had till then smiled propitiously. Long years of exemption from their enemy had made them contemptuous of it, and the breaks cut in the forests had been allowed to overgrow. Only a day or so before they had been speaking lightly of fire. They were taken at a single hour's notice: a sad, a solemn warning."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Sir William Heans, glancing pensively about him that he might observe how much of the Settlement could be seen across a thicket of banksia; "just, upon my word, as the shrubs here are being allowed to reclaim this hill-side!"

"Puff," panted the old fellow, waving the flies from his eyes, "it is like the old enemy, I think! So quickly does it take advantage of supine dealing that it almost has you unawares. Yet I would not call our fine scenery anything but a friend, a clumsy friend perhaps, but not a wicked or a violent one."

"A friend one would prefer to retain," said Sir William, staring vaguely before him. "Alas, how many do we meet in existence with a fault somewhat similar!"

"True," answered the Chaplain, in half-tentative agreement, "but I presume it arises oftentimes out of the difficulties of life. There are many roads that cross, and suddenly, hardly seeing what we do, we find we are pressing, perhaps, in the path of another."

"It is a pity, my dear sir, that that is sometimes true," said Sir William, pausing with his hands behind him, and testing again how much he could observe of the town through the thicker weaving of foliage.

"It seems a pity," agreed the other, waiting and smiling up at him gravely; "but, if you will pardon my freedom, I have observed that the Almighty for His reasons sometimes cramps the boundaries of life."

"Our forbearance is to be tested, you would say, on one another?" Sir William asked.

"Well—well!" the Chaplain laughed, mildly.

"It is indeed never happy work," said Sir William, strolling on and speaking with a saddened calm, "to endeavour to explain

such a situation to any one. How difficult—I may say, how *prononcé* are many situations!”

“Some persons will not believe until they feel,” said the old fellow with his wistful smile, “and even then the surprise is too trying to them.”

“True, ill-feeling is too often so created,” said Heans, as they approached the top of the knoll. “It is, sir, I suppose, the shock upon a fellow’s trust in himself and you!”

“You put it excellently, my good friend,” the intendant answered, and as he spoke he seemed to hesitate a little, as if they would go no further that evening than this secluded portion of the road. “Indeed, sir, I have known of what you hint. Our faith in mankind is not the better for things like these. Eh well—eh well, I presume, sir, we may scatter in our path a little forgiveness here—there a little forgetfulness!”

Both the Chaplain and Sir William here stopped. The latter looked about him in the hot covert—stood a moment staring at the gentleman with a calm abstraction. “Pardon me for my familiarity,” he said at last, “but you look fatigued. Shall we not curtail our promenade for this evening?” Though the old fellow would not confess to fatigue, they turned about. In the cove below was the soft labouring of evening waves.

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But, as we have said, Sir William’s luck was with him, and by a curious accident he was spared the keen distress of an encounter with the clergyman. This singular occurrence happened as follows.

We have already mentioned Heans’ business at the Boys’ Penitentiary of Point Puer, where he acted as copyist and accountant in the commissariat and workshop departments. Point Puer is a narrow neck of land which spreads across parallel with the town to a few yards from the Island of the Dead, with which at low tide it is almost connected. It is treed and formed of the same pinkish stone as the island. Upon it stood the extensive Penitentiary Buildings and Workshops, in which almost every trade was in full working order, from boat-building to book-binding, coopering to baking bread.

On the flat of rocks below the Point, where several boats were secured to a wooden slip-way, Heans was in the habit of awaiting the whale-boat after the day’s business. He was sometimes accompanied by the Settlement physician, or another, like himself, returning home, but often he was alone. At times the boat was early and at times it was late. If it was likely to be late, he was generally informed so by the boatswain on his way to his work, and given the time at which it would be likely to arrive. It would vary in punctuality from half-past six to seven, and now and then considerably after. Owing to the bush fire, and previous to that, to the arrival of the Government yacht *Elisa* to “heave down,” when the boat was required to

attend the tram, Heans' patience had been considerably tried by long periods of tedious waiting.

It was now the Saturday subsequent to the fire, and during the morning journey he had been informed by the boatswain that he would be later than usual in taking him off, owing to the arrival of Lieutenant-Colonel Elliot and the officers of the 51st Regiment on a visit of inspection. In the evening he came down to the landing about 6.30; wandered for a while about the low flat of rocks; and when the tide drove him back, returned to the slip and took a seat, as was his habit, in one of the boats. Two new official whale-boats had just been completed by the boat-builders, and one of these—an elaborate affair in different coloured woods—lay with others below the slip. It was a beautiful craft, light and graceful of line, part of its glowing timbers almost black, the rest of a golden wood so luminous it might almost have been a metal. She had only been launched that morning, and was the pride of her designers. She lay, half on the slip and half on the rock, the innermost of three large whale-boats, and Heans, as the tide drove him in, went and examined her, and afterwards entered and "possessed his soul in patience" in one of her seats. Sir William Heans was seen to go down to the slip to examine, and afterwards seat himself in the bow of the new boat. After that glimpse of him waiting at the landing he was never seen again.

From Sir William's account the night seems to have been sultry, with a fitful breeze "howing" over the Point from the harbour heads. As twilight fell, finding himself yawning and heavy with the atmosphere, he rose and reseat himself in the bottom of the boat, his back and head propped against a seat. In this position he remained, half napping, half reflecting, till presently he actually fell asleep. He awoke with a start, oppressed with the smell of new varnish, with his head on the bottom. He had been jerked from his first position. Everything had changed: it was dark, a strong wind was blowing, and the boat rose bodily and fell on the water. He sat up. The tossing sea without was fuming up a haze between him and the Port Arthur lamps. All was silent except water, wind, and a slight scraping as the boats were swung together. The boatswain was late—no sound of him beneath the scurry of leaves. Heans became alarmed at the free movement of the bow in which he lay, and though there was a light visible on the cliffs above, and he knew where he was, he scrambled to his knees, and felt for the gunwale of the boat on his right. His hand at first found nothing, but further out, he struck clumsily not on the side but on the round stern of the old whale-boat, his hand slipping into the corner. He at once reflected that for her bow to take such a position, the new boat must have been working outward along the old craft, and something had given way under the tease of wind and wave. He pushed up hastily into the bow, and felt for the

rope, by which he might draw her back to safety. There was no rope in the ringbolt, nor did it seem from the smoothness of the paint as if there had ever yet been one there. He then felt about over her bow-decking with no success, but afterwards groping underneath, he found a great pin had been driven into the wood (to save doubtless the paint upon her bow-works) and this was now bent outward—probably by the vanished rope.

Whether the tide was an out-of-the-way high one; whether the new craft had some fault or trait which made her uncommon gamblesome upon her mooring; whether the very lightness of her timbers made her jerk the more disastrous upon her stay; here she was, loose, and scraping away.

The wind was now blowing wildly over the Point, and if the boat had got out, Heans reflected, he alone could hardly have poled her back. There was an earth-grey sky over the warm and pitchy dark, with a flare of invisible stars. In the wind a few tepid rain-drops. It is an ill wind that blows no one any good!

He says he was about to stretch across and grope for the stern of the old boat; when, quick as a flash, a way out of his difficulties occurred to him. He sank in the wind and rattle upon the bottom planking, and for a few rapid heart-beats considered the singular chance thrown in his way. Cautiously he rose on his arm. He could not consult his watch, but considered it was not much after 7.30. The gale which was delaying the commandant's guests, the noise, and black, were a romantic chance. He had waited for the whale-boat in all weathers, and his ears were accustomed to seek the jolt of her sweeps. He was rapidly convinced she was not approaching, even if she had left the wharves. Even as he lay under the gunwale, straining his hearing, the bow with a loud "creak" swung out, and he knew if he was to get her back he had no time to lose. He saw he could no longer haul her in by the gunwale of the old boat. He remained clinging breathless as he was to the bottom. By his side were four great sweeps, and as the boat dived and nodded further into the wash of the sea, he lifted and tried the weight of one of these. Again by the puff over the gunwale, and a sudden list, he felt the wind had found her. He felt the beautiful craft shudder uneasily into freedom.

He found courage to lie *perdu*, however, till she seemed to be swung like a cradle; then, staggering up, he clumsily fitted the two sweeps upon their pins. Before he fell upon the seat between, he threw a wild "help" towards the slip, and another into the rattling grey curtain of the bay. He might with little suspicion have even now turned her head and tugged her back towards the Point, but when there was no voice (nothing but the wash and wind) on either side, he worked her about only till she faced Long Bay, and settling down in some real difficulty with the oars, began to help her away with the wind. The wuther of

the night was with him. Upon his right he held the smudgy flicker of Port Arthur, and high in the swinging trees behind, the windows of the Point Puer Buildings, dimming as they rose and fell. The elaborate craft, all grandeur as she was, was light and manageable for her length, and he could feel immediately a fine answer of her heavy bow to the fall of his sweeps. He confesses that he pulled wild and ragged enough, but presently slowed, using his strength more calmly. Quickly after, he rose a glimmer on his left, which he knew must be the cottage of the sexton who lived beside the dead on Cemetery Island, and pulling her out for fear of the shallows, he gasped a wild prayer as it ran by him like a shuddering mast.

In this romantic way Sir William found and took his chance. Thus he began his race in good earnest from the prison and prisoning hills of that Port Arthur whose fluttering bracket-lamps flecked the nether wuther of dark and wind.

Under the Isle of the Dead, he turned her round, and pointed for his hills. The gale swept him away; but when he had got the shelter of the trees of the island between him and Point Puer, and thrust her out across the wind, still her ladyship preferred to make Long Bay upon her broadside. This would never do. Changing his mind, he got her head again to the wind and her will, and having had enough of the experience, and the breakers of the channel, and fearful of losing his bearings with the Port Arthur lights, he set a course as much east as he dared of Long Bay, aiming with his utmost strength to force her as far as possible along between Cofiapanny and the arm.

But for her unruly head, he might have cast away his left oar, so intent was all his skill and handling on his right, which alone constrained her from Long Bay and the likely course of the pursuing boat. Every fibre of his elderly powers was thus engaged in conquering so much of the wind, and he was aided in many an unthought way by the distinguished make of boat and sweeps, the latter, though made each for a double pair of arms, being fashioned in a mysterious and knowledgeable harmony with the picturesque vehicle and the romantic personages they had been meant to propel. He rowed as he had never rowed, rising up and tugging her in against the sea; now labouring her round as she played half-wilful into danger or swung haughty and contemptuous over the very yawn of tide and wind, and feeling only a passing peace of mind when he most felt the strain of her tossing and mettlesome displeasure. Thus he frantic tugged till he felt he had won a margin of easting from the drift and the barge's inclinations, and so began to hope for the end. For the sea was dark and wide, and the indented, forest-skirted beach meandered its ragged miles and miles, and who was to know to what spot upon it he was gone? Thus, I say, he ran her on till—breathless and exhausted—he began to hope for the sound of a white shore upon the unpeopled darks. Several times he

thought he heard the pæan of a beach, and had much steady pulling and mastering of my lady before he was punished back to the empty crying of endless water. He fancied he heard at this more heavy-hearted time (and lost with a gasp of chilly horror) one fearful rapid jolting of oars. Again there were two long hails or shouts in some dim corner in the west. Yet again he heard a sudden, mighty sound like the wind in the cordage of a ship, and was in doubt and distress, thinking that pale glimmer of the Commandant's windows had got changed for Point Puer and he was out in the channel. After that blind obstinacy growing blinder. And so on, in a sort of stupor of mechanical agony (no more liking the black places where he was) till he was waked sharp right on top of a hand's-breadth of gnarled beach, and pulled in the boat amid a pleasant and mighty blowing of enormous trees.

Heans did not sit long in the wave-beaten boat, but preparing his nether garments in the best manner for the service, and with his shoes in his hand, he left her ladyship to her own quarrel and hurried off east in the water. He did not know yet with any certainty where he was. He might be perilously close to the head of Long Bay, or miles east of where he hoped to land, though, as he says, he had always had a faculty for places, and was inwardly persuaded he had hit near his mark. The thing was to run from the boat. From her bottom planking he took a small boat-hook to serve him as a staff, throwing overboard all the other fittings he could lay a hasty hand upon, to give what appearance he could of disaster. And away he went, feeling his way by the waves about his steps.

And here we bid good-bye (with the absconder) "to the bedecked and beautiful craft which was afterwards to carry so many distinguished persons back and forwards over these waters, upon whose dark wavelets she was thus wildly born."

And what of Sir William Heans in these disreputable ways? How would you and I, O Reader, have felt pushing along those wastes of blowing beach, up to our knees in water, in search of a wraith of help—an old native woman? What prudent, pleasant thing would we have had to say about it afterwards? Yet when he had left the galley in the safe distance, perhaps, the worst was in that doubt that hung in these mysterious deeps of trees, whose song was great with emptiness. Could the woman be here? Yet as he buffeted his way about a rocky point, or splashed into the shelter of a sandy inlet; as he found a path here about a fallen giant, there an obstructing headland; as one long, swinging reach gave place to another, and he felt by the rain upon the left side of his face that he must have turned at last into the coast opposite the prison—nay was now, indeed, under his own mountains—as steadier and steadier grew his confidence in the veranda of the woods and died his starting mistrust of the lashing and ebbing sea: who will say that hope

was not born in his uncrediting breast, who will say that his spirit sank and never fluttered again into a species of elderly elation?

These reverberating ways, the warm rain beating upon the wild wind, each heaving, water-logged step, would have been an increasing happiness with a touch less anxiety about the old guide and the morrow. "The tragic distresses of portions of our lives," he writes philosophically to his friend Sir Charles, "make at worst a pleasant interest for the young of future ages. Such is life! And the thought ought to uphold us in moments of grave and perhaps bewildered effort."

In a gap where the goblin-range from the sea-heads ends, and the one from up harbour passes in behind like a wall (as may be seen from the ruins), there was good shelter for the fugitive, and to win as near to this as he could before morning was his struggle. He had narrowly examined the shoulder from the settlement. It was his best landmark to the place of appointment given to the woman—a spot in line with Dead Island and the Signal Station on Mount Arthur over behind the prison.

When Sir William Heans judged, by the witch-lights of Port Arthur, and by instinct, he was in measurable distance of this point, he elected to rest himself and pass the time till light arrived in a tree, by a great fragment of whose boughs, washed by the tide, he ascended to the lower part of the trunk. Being afraid of falling, he did not permit himself to more than rest (indeed, he was too fevered for sleep), and at the first gaze of dawn he returned immediately into the water. As the fog swept by, he found right outside him, like a forest in the sea, the great shoulder of trees, and advancing for some forty minutes, he climbed again from water to scrub, ascending in the bracken and "brambly wilderness" to a point of vantage where he lay down to await a glimpse of Dead Island and Mount Arthur. There had been one heavy shower of rain after two o'clock, but it was now fine. The wind was from the north. The day broke grey and warm. He fell into a short nap. When he awoke the sun had dispersed the gloom of night from the lake, and in the centre lay Dead Island, with a couple of boats pulling round in the heaving channel-way, while to the south-west behind the spire of the village lifted the peak of Mount Arthur, mantled with mossy forests. A few minutes later he was retracing his steps along the hills, ascending higher as he went. Towards nine o'clock he brought mountain and island into line. He stood looking about him in a glen of fern and heath, so wild and empty with wind his soul despaired of such a guest as another human figure. With the two boats swaying now between himself and Dead Island, he hardly dared to raise a halloo. He, however, gave a low call. The wuther of the foliage answered him. He called again with a certain importunity. A bird scattered away, an insect clipped from the

ferns. He ascended some distance further, along and upward. Shortly after he heard a tapping noise, very slightly, as might have been made by the beak of a woodpecker. In deep despondency he descended towards the sound, for he thought it likely to be the natural noise of an animal. Twice in so many minutes he caught it again. He climbed down till he came above a glade of great gnarled gums. Oh Heaven—in the stem of one of these some one had recently cut a gash with an instrument! It was fresh and red. A little higher, towards a horizontal limb, there was a second cut in the bark. On the limb itself, there sat a sort of bundle of old clothes very still, and presently, out of this, an arm projected, and began deftly to hack at the lurking place of some marsupial!

CHAPTER IV

A PRINCESS OF THE TIÈRS

SIR WILLIAM hardly allowed them an hour for counsel and preparation, pushing off immediately with the old woman in the lead. From the forest into which they now delved, as a man slides under the sea in a diver's helmet, they never emerged till they stood, yet in its serried trees, on the brink of the cliffs of Waterfall Bay. The tree-fern, musk-plant, brush, and lofty timber shut them from all prospect of the outer world as entirely as if they had remained in the gullies, rather than struggled and cut their way up "hill upon hill, alp upon alp," till, unknown to Heans, the top of the main ridge had been scaled.

After that, though descent became rather more than ascent the order of these hidden places, Heans, from his own account, seems to have seen the eastern sea but a half a dozen times, and at these as a vagueness hanging on the tops of trees indistinguishable from the sky.

There is a story in the Australian histories of an escaped prisoner who, arriving in a starving condition at a camp of natives, was permitted by them to follow their wanderings unmolested, but unfed. He was thus brought to a condition bordering on death; when a native woman took pity upon him, married him, and divulged to him the intricacies of how to win a subsistence from the scrub.¹ A tradition such as this emphasizes the hopeless position of a prisoner, wandering unarmed on these Port Arthur boundaries, and while it points a cause why the search from headquarters is soon grimly abandoned, it raises the question whether Heans' abettor were not, in employing Conapanny, guided by knowledge of so significant a legend.

While we shall not enter here into unnecessary details, which could possess but little interest for the reader, certain intimate and curious incidents of the four to five days' journey may be worth repeating.

Conapanny did not make at once east up the hill, but led a course slanting rightways over the shoulder, descending about four o'clock into the gully on the hinder side. Their progress was at all times a sort of wrestle with nature, the undergrowth about the iron-bark entangling their ascending feet, and higher

¹ Demarr.

up in a sort of morass darkened with tree-ferns, footing and hand-hold becoming spongy and superficial. Higher yet among the rock and monstrous yarra was a thornless and pathless brush, head-high, asking a monotonous breasting, though this they now escaped by the hinder descent. In a creek in the gully, they made good northward progress, stooping in the water under the emerald spread of ferns.

Conapanny led, excepting when Sir William's subdued chivalry broke its sensible restraints and retired mistaken. She wore a faded green-flowered dress, the bottom flounces and sleeves of which were cut away, a grey plaid shawl, and the inevitable white handkerchief about her head. Whatever she had been through to reach the Port, she had kept her apparel presentable. On her back, supported by her chest, she carried (when met) a second shawl for Heans' use, and two rush-bags, one large and one small. The larger bag contained some cooked frogs (on which Heans broke his fast), two snakes, a lot of little fish of the size of whitebait, some small crawfish, and some fresh-water mussels. It should have contained an opossum also, had Heans not arrived at an inopportune moment. The other bag held a horn flask for water, her tinder wood, and some edible roots. In her right hand she carried some sticks and bark on fire. In the other a staff.

Her baggage had also included a hatchet, which Heans now passed forward or wielded at her request.

On the first evening they bivouacked on the shingle near the water, Conapanny erecting a shelter of gum-boughs on the windward side, and making for Heans a "stockman's mattress" of gum-tree leaves. When he had made a steady dinner of "white-bait" and roots, she went off upon her hunting, all the animals on which they were to subsist being night prowlers; and he did not see her again till he awoke at dawn. When the shock of his strange and beautiful surroundings had gone off, he observed her seated by the water's edge, picking from the mud by her toes, what he afterwards found to be shell-fish. Near by, under the greying bank, the smoke of a spent fire was ascending; and when he had arisen and refreshed himself, he found, laid on some fresh leaves, a little animal which he was told was a porcupine, and had the flesh and taste of a fowl.

He had been bothered far into that night by the extraordinary noises made by the frogs, so hoarse and full of volume, as one voice answered another, as too closely to resemble distant human utterance. He was also strangely agitated by the noise of the curlew, which, as he says, "is rather a bitter cry from the night than the song of a bird." That is all written of import of his second and only less grave night in the open.

When Conapanny had destroyed all signs of their stay, they pushed on in the water till about the hour of nine, when they climbed out by a tree and dropped on to the other ascent. They

seem to have ascended; descended to water; and again ascended a short distance; for on of the following day they must have topped the grand ridge and begun the descent on the coastal mountain called "The Pinnacle." They were all the following day in accomplishing this, arriving at Waterfall Bay about midday of the next.

On the second night, therefore, they bivouacked on the forest side, Conapanny cooking for Sir William Heans a small fish she had snatched from the second water, and for herself a snake which she selected from three or four, choosing one with a silver belly as "budgery" (good) and throwing away another which was yellow beneath as "bell gammon" (no joke). Heans was reminded of how a European will detect a mushroom from a toadstool. His guide prepared both dainties in her own way, wrapping them in mud and baking in ashes. When the mud was hard, fish and snake were removed clean and (speaking for the fish) very savoury. The encampment here was rendered tiresome by the hurried return of Conapanny from her night roving, having been followed by a "hyena opossum" (now called "native tiger"), which she described as a brown animal with black stripes and a large mouth. Its legs were short, but its length, with its tail, was as "long as gentleman wite ma is tall." Heans left his shelter and would have moved out in the direction she had come, but she seemed hysterical and unreliable, crying "Nangry—nangry" ("Sit down"), and Heans heard her wandering about the camp through the dark hours digging for roots among the grass-trees and bracken.¹

A frugal breakfast of roots and mussels followed in the morning, but before evening Conapanny had made good the failure of the preceding night, by the capture of an opossum and the welcome discovery of some honey. It was a day, however, of singular tribulations. The ascent was woefully steep, dark, and overgrown, and armies of brambles, grass-trees, and a peculiarly malignant thorn, turned them aside repeatedly and pitilessly from the direct route. Again they came on sludgy hollows on the hills, and rocky pockets of the tiers, where dragons seemed to have rioted, ripping up giant yarras or stringy bark, and toppling them over into the creepers, where they lay, balancing across the hanger, presenting a series of unscalable walls. It was in one of these dark dells that a snake flashed up and fastened on the cuff of Heans' coat; and when Conapanny flung herself towards him, it suddenly turned and fixed its fangs in her wrist. To Heans' astonishment she calmly unfastened its teeth with her fingers, killed it, and put it in her bag. And all she would say to his tragic query whether it was poisonless, was "Away—away" "Oh yes—oh yes.")

¹ In "nangry." Conapanny uses a New Holland colloquialism, picked up possibly in settlers' pidgin.

It must have been over the ridge, at last, on the eastern descent, they found themselves in a "dead forest," and before they knew it, were enveloped in an awful landscape of prone, erect, and leaning poles. So close and numerous were the dead, so menacing the silent desert of them, so wearying were the mounting, climbing, and dropping occasioned by this place—so unending appeared its extent—that Conapanny, in a moment of indecision, seemed unable to determine whether to go down, retreat, or on which side to look again for the living green of the less evasive if more boisterous enemy. It was Heans who insisted upon picking their way back and climbing round this remote enormous graveyard. So they made, perhaps too timorously, a grim and tiresome return, camping at evening safe, if still on the southern edge of that labyrinth of tragic weirds.

Of this trying adventure Sir William remarks jokingly, that "there were moments when he thought they were fairly caught in the embrace of Death."

Conapanny had caught her opossum during the morning climb, ascending a tree and dropping some twigs down a hole; cleverly detecting by the scolding of the disturbed animal where it hid, and cutting an orifice lower down under its lair. At the same halt she brought some honeycomb to Sir William on a piece of bark, and on his enquiring how she came by it, she caught a bee in her hand, and fixing some white down on its back, released it, pointing after it up a tree to which it flew. In short, it was a woeful hard day of it, yet after all (so he thought) the deeper they became entangled in these pathless places, the further were their footsteps buried from the eye of that silent yet ever-present follower, and the nearer (as he confidently believed) did they approach their haven of departure and its phantom ship. At eventide, despite of her adventurous day, Conapanny disappeared, scouting with an indescribable gesture all help from Heans; and he, outwearied with his axe work, saw no more of her till in the morning he found her grimly cooking a wombat, and three little animals, the counterpart of kangaroos, the size of field-mice.

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On one or two occasions, during a halt here and a balk there, the native woman had dropped certain curious information, herself inducing Heans to make enquiries by enlivening the way with an anecdote or two of the Pacificator, in which she imitated inimitably the well known pompousness of manner of the great Robinson, adding certain other incidents of her life, in which figured a Scotchman, whose broad diction she rendered with an amazing faithfulness, though often, as she confessed, not understanding its true meaning. From these entertainments, given, one would say, with a convivial and social intention, she was once tentatively led by Sir William to explain the secret of her presence in the stable at Oughtryn's on the night of his first struggle with

Spafield. How came she to be there? The reader will remember her ghostly appearance before the stalls.

She lowered her kerchiefed face awhile. Then with a tone somewhat sour, she outlined rather than told this incident.

Surridge had confessed to her the secret of the cracks. His promise in the *Plutarch* to "come to her or die" had filled her with terror. As we know, Heans rode out that afternoon with Abelia, outside whose room Conapanny was seen sitting. Conapanny had heard from the woman that "miss" had ridden out, yet lingered for a while watching the incomers and outgoers from the Chamber. While thus engaged, her sharp ears heard a window go very slowly up on the other side of the sentry-box. Knowing "Mr. Tusó" was out, she wondered who this might be in his room. Harkening, she heard a slight movement now and then, and presently what she took to be an exclamation in a man's voice. Shifting along under the passage window, she was suddenly affrighted by the words "On my oath!" rapped out in the tones of Spafield.

Having no love for Joseph Spars, and hoping to catch him at his thievery, or what he might be about in "Mitta Tusó's room," she inserted her small figure in the gap between the sentry-box and the wall of the house, and pushing on, pulled her face slowly up to the corner of his window.

One peep and she saw Spars by the table, examining something which, by the leather head-band and silk, she took to be a hat. Another peep, and she perceived there was writing on the band and something peculiar in the hat. A third look, and with a spasm of pain she thought she recognised a once familiar article of headgear.

She saw no more, for the man suddenly came towards the window, and after a considerable pause, climbed out and strode off round the corner of the house. Poor Conapanny pressed out and followed him round the house to the kitchen corner. There she saw him go across into the stable, where presently he lit a candle. She watched the place minute after minute, seeing little, when he emerged and took his way quickly out of the yard gate. Behind him the candle still burned in the stable.

No sooner had he gone than Conapanny ran across into the harness-cave in which the candle stood. There for a considerable while she searched walls, sacks, and harness-press for some sign of the hat, but she found it not. Quite beside herself, she made a hiding-place between two sacks at the rear of the cave, and drawing another down upon her, waited for Spars' return. He came in some half an hour later, carrying a long pole and two other articles, which he threw down against the wall. She then watched him while he approached the end of the sack-chain, severed the thongs, and lowered the former to the ground. She saw him cut the bottle-neck from the thongs and carefully draw the latter into his hands from the crack above. She watched him

pocket the strings and glass, and after, with a fresh thong and fork of wood, attach the chain in the way Heans found it. All this she saw. Finally, she held her breath while he drew away the sacks beneath and carefully searched after and gathered the fragments of glass into his handkerchief. He was very deliberate. His last act was to return to the pole he had discarded, and attach with a fragment of rock and a nail, the prong and haft of an old fork. This implement he hid in the corner of the cave, and extinguishing the light, left the stables.

This was how the native-woman came to be in the stables on the night the man took the body.

Heans, in reply, repeated the story how "poor Walter" had cut the crack, and how nearly he himself had escaped by the effort of the dying man. Again, though she did not press him with any sign of curiosity, he told her something of the man's agony of separation. Still, she that was called Moicrime showed no sign of interest. Heans said no more of his wound and death, but when he asked her—one day as they sat on the hill—if she knew indeed where Surridge was buried, she concealed her face for a long while, rocking gently to and fro. At last she drew up the left sleeve of her dress, and showed him, above the elbow, a bracelet of jet-black hair such as the natives wear.¹

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Their luck seemed to hold. The weather kept warm and overcast, with winds blowing from north and south-east. They noticed the stronger breeze as they descended in the weather side of the woods. Here they were,—on the last day but one from port, and far from being followed by one human sound—nor single shot nor signal bell—were almost oppressed by the cloistered desolation in which they had been steeped: nay, haunted by nothing more human than the unhuman note of the bell-bird and that other, as fairy-like, with a voice like the melodious crackling of a carriage-whip. In despite of this, deep and remote from man as they were lost; sliding and struggling and wrestling in the scented embrace of these enormous places; Heans confesses to a tiresome thought or two at evening, and in the despondency of fatigue, in the direction of those organized and disciplined searchers of Port Arthur, many in numbers, calm in knowledge, old in experience. Though they were not likely for any human or ghostly reason to search this unconsidered region, still, as he slanted further north and began to neighbour the station at Eaglehawk Neck, he was unreasonably agitated at the close proximity of dogs and red-coats.

They camped by a glittering cascade, hinting already of the bay and the waterfall. Conapanny had killed a guana during the

¹ The privilege of a chief.

day, and hunting up the torrent at night, soberly rejoiced at morning in two widgeon, a couple of emu's eggs, and a native companion. They struggled down that day for some time in the water, loath to leave it and its siren-song of falls and sea, and then forsaking it at the guide's urging, though much to Heans' uneasiness, as too far south for debouchment in their direction, took again to woods, momentarily clearer as to undergrowth. Heans noted how green was the forest in the obscure weather; enlarges on the beautiful grey wattle; records how the forest trees now grew smaller and closer, and how the red heath rouged the ferns and grasses and the golden bottlebrushes of the Banksia. However, Heans came near being right in his anxiety, and the native woman near wrong in her obstinacy. Lower down they fell again into forest growth of extraordinary density, from which, about the hour of twelve, they pressed out with a shocking suddenness fair on the north cliff of the towering bay.

Waterfall Bay is only four to five miles from Eaglehawk Neck, from which, however, it is hidden by the corner of Pirates' Bay, and the usual heavy forest, through which, in our own day, a struggling bridle-path is kept open.

The water was dark blue, and moved in a body against the beachless walls. Far down in it was to be seen the yellow kelp swinging this way and that. The cliffs, of a grey-brown stone, were so high and sheer, that a pebble thrown with all the force from the top could not be seen to reach the water. Yet the bay, in size, seemed rather a smallish cove, feathered about the rim with a grass of forests, out of which, down the opposite wall, fell a ribbon of distant water, subduedly splashing in the sea.

The morning slopes by which they had climbed, hooded over the place in a monumental amphitheatre: in the sombre foliage the white stems of many straight, grim trees.

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In shape the bay made three sides of a square, but, just past the falls, where the southern met the western cliff, there was a deep inlet in the corner, at the bottom of which, against the flat wall, some rocks and bushes had collected in a platform, forming a foothold on the tide level, where elsewhere was nothing but the drop to water. Here in calm weather a boat might hang a few seconds, while in the bushes higher on this abrupt secretion was shelter from storm and tide. To this platform, a deep narrow cleft or chasm gave from the forest above, and here, according to the directions of Captain Stiff, Sir William, on his arrival, was to light a signal fire for twenty minutes every morning at the moment of daybreak.

Sir William Heans' story now becomes a mere narration of monotonous events: jottings of the weather, meals, fears, doubts, and sunrise effects. They spent the rest of that day in climbing

through the scrub to the opposite cliff, camping not immediately above the waterfall, but further inland, within handy distance of the chasm giving upon the platform. There was safety in the chasm as a hiding-place if necessary, whose abruptnesses were difficult of negotiation for any straying animal. Conapanny, after a hasty supper, clambered down and gathered in the twilight enough material for the morning's signal, remaining below to fire, watch, and extinguish it. Here Heans took his place on the following morning, collecting much material during the day, and contriving to kindle his fire during a storm of wind and rain, being in turn replaced by Conapanny, who brought food. The storm was a grim affair. The evening ended warm, though electric and thundery. Dark fell in silence. There was no wind. The whole vast night was on its edge. At close intervals a screaming roar sagged down the arches of the sea. Close to the grey shore the lightning snagged and whipped, flashing up a wonderful light green amber wave and a warm scarred wall. The next day—a grey day under a pall—the box-like bay had swelled, and was full of earth-coloured, plunging seas.

It was rather a cruel joke to think of a boat caught in such a place as it was then; the while he could not help feeling, as he eyed the swirl and heaving surface, how romantic was the promise of help by such an offing, and how much further away after such an upheaval. Both he and the guide were anxious for their phantom rescuer and said little of the matter.

He spent the first two or three days content enough to sit and rest in hollows above and below cliff. The walls were honeycombed with strange buttresses and holes, many of them down on the water line, into which the tide swung like a beast into a lair. In two of such places, high and low in the chasm, Sir William saw the storm out, and also something of his more acute anxieties and watchfulness. On a bracken couch, with some cypress-bushes swaying over the mouth, he experienced, in these precipitous places, a certain triumph of effort and achievement, or would, if he could have believed better in the dreadful pothor of the haven. And then, as the water began to subside, and they began to grow bolder and easier between the seclusions of night and chasm, a swing of the breeze brought the sudden horrid clamour of the dogs on the Neck, sending them running to their fastnesses, while at another time, an officer or sergeant, occasionally firing his gun, approached, along the slopes, apparently after a couple of eagles which soared for a while over the bay. These two occasions utterly squashed their growing confidence, and made them impatiently uneasy with the tedious hours, and acutely anxious for rescue. And then, as hour followed hour, and day followed day—four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten—and not a sign of shipping on the clearing sea, Heans' spirit underfell somewhat of his demeanour, and began to whisper the chill word "late."

* * * * *

Sir William says he asked Conapanny one morning, when she was cooking a couple of quail, what she had done with her reading books. *Colonel Jack* she seemed, by her gesticulations, to have buried somewhere, no doubt where it could be resurrected. *Paul and Virginia* "me leave with big-fellow Oughtryn's gel. Gel lie tink too much."

"What did she say?" Sir William asked. "Did she promise to keep it safe?"

"Awoy, she said to Conapanny," turning her face, blinking about and speaking with a surprising preciseness, "'How long must I keep book for Conapanny—a long, long while?'"

"Me tell Oughtryn's gel, 'You keep book for Conapanny till by-em-by. She come fetch book soon.'"

* * * * *

They steadily took their turn at chasm and beacon, watching bravely the weather calm, and contending who should be first to see a ship on the horizon. And then as day of calm succeeded day, and then a second week, and then a third of tiresome anxieties and fears crept by, and then a fourth week arrived, and day after day blazed up over the empty sea, illumining the falls, and carrying through the hot hours its inexorable voice into the gloaming—though Sir William, ever courtly, repeated his excuses for Stiff as a man of incurable deliberation, yet meaning well, he ate less and less of Conapanny's crawfish and cockatoo (confessing inwardly to a sickness both at the viands and their grave and forsaken position), while Conapanny, when she thought he was out of sight up the chasm, drew from her shawl a long-concealed pipe, and sat pulling secretly at some weed of her fancy alongside the fruitless ashes of the beacon.

Stiff was late.

Another seven days went by, and he does not like to confess how disastrous were his thoughts and speculations, how sick he was of the roots and spare food, though still keeping up (he hopes for his honour as a fellow cherishing the memory of cultivated life) the mannerisms and habits of confidence and hope. To his friend Scarning he says he is to this day ashamed of his appearance . . . and the angry dismay of his spirit. He describes himself in shawl, spectacles, and unseemly beard, on these watches, masticating a crawfish claw or a shell-fish for his breakfast. He describes the grey, harsh-voiced evenings. He tells of the noble quiet of the morning platform. It was one of those echoing-places of the sea, where the cliff arches over and makes with some monolith a cellared beating—as if the tide made and ebbed over the written slabs of some cathedral. There he would stand, in the half-dusk, an ignoble and tattered object, sick with the deferred hope of fruitless days, staring with a shred of obstinacy into that wan opening in the walls. He describes

the hot sunrises, beautiful enough. This one, "a splash of red currant on a silver plate"; that one, "a badly trimmed oil lamp on a damask cloth"; and another, Heaven knows, in less sad circumstances a pretty thing! It was a sky of mighty lavender clouds, backed with remote pale alps, and fired with a rifling of pink. A grey satin sea, lit very bright and pale, especially near the cliffs and fall, where the glassy path was bestrown with lavender and carnation. He relates how in the silence of that flat sea he heard a curious "creaking" echo, coming, it seemed from the left hand wall. He drew back a step in the shelter of the inlet. At that instant, he saw a singular object appear behind the rocks and trees beyond the falls. It moved slowly, and looked to him like a broken mast, supporting in temporary fashion a yard and sail. In another moment a second mast appeared, intact, and suspending a patched lug-sail. The thing moved slowly in, its shrouds and dangling hamper sharp and unearthly in the strange light. She was a long, low ship, overloaded or naturally low in the water, which you could almost have reached from the deck. Her hull, which had once been painted white, seemed as if it had been struck by lightning, so remarkably scarred was it with discoloration and decay. As the swell bellied under her, it disclosed her under-part green with sedgy weeds. Her rudder had been strained and recently strengthened by a great transverse beam. Half her foremast was broken away, but a tanned square-sail was securely rigged upon two yards, and on her bowsprit, as she came, she deftly ran up, over her old grey jibs, a third of a tough dark brown. Her lug was "like my shepherd's-plaid shawl," says Heans. Ropes hung in festoons from her broken masts and bulwarks, trailing behind her in the satin sea. A fowl greeted the morning from the deck. A pig grunted. So she slowly came. In the increasing light, her deck and deck-houses projected homely and strange. Her after cabin gave by a door on the starboard deck almost on the wheel. In this stood a ragged, grave, tall man, apparently chewing his breakfast. As the schooner fluttered to a stop, he cast up an oppressed and anxious hand.

After all poor Stiff had come.

* * * * *

Sir William Heans knew not how long he stood there. At last he felt a touch on his arm. It was Conapanny, the black, with her rush-bags on her back, and her bit of smouldering wood and staff in her hand.

* * * * *

"Life's a poor player," quotes an ancient novelist, "that struts and struts his time upon the stage and then is heard no more." Heans, as he was swung out in the schooner's boat from Waterfall Bay, might be said to be making his final meander towards the wings, and indeed, if, faultlessly costumed, he lingered

there awhile, sympathetically observing the real and the unreal; if the caller seems loath to ring his summons for this quiet figure; we, at least, have little more to add to this narrative of an escape. In this manner, and with these efforts, Sir William Heans disappeared for good from the knowledge of many people, and if we are aware his fate was far from being the melancholy one it was reported, strictly speaking the rest of his life is hardly of general interest. Writing to his friend Sir Charles of his future prospects and the things a man may do, he reflects incidentally how "a fellow may engage himself in being simply a generous, temperate, and noble person, passing his leisure in reading and talking for entertainment, and yet fall short of a difficult ideal." It will serve our turn to suppose he engaged himself in some effort of this nature.

We have a few more things to add to these narratives. One of the most surprising, perhaps, is the behaviour of Conapanny, the native woman.

When Stiff's ragged youngsters warily brought in the boat, and Heans turned about to hearten the guide and hand her down, he found that Conapanny had gone, and glancing in his annoyance towards the chasm, he saw her climbing already half way up among the pine-like foliage. At once the native waved her hand calling "Good-bye Mitta Tusso," and as she scrambled back, calling up the chasm, he realised with a tragic pang she was saying "farewell." She had often expressed distaste for the voyage, but he had never credited her with so reckless an intention. As for her, feeling perhaps that by delaying Heans she might endanger the boat, or that they might attempt to stop her, she continued to mount the chasm, once or twice waving her hand with a quite English "God's speed." In a moment she would have been gone from sight, and it was only when Heans used a stern tone, threatening himself to remain, that she came slowly and sourly down. In a short time they descended to the boat (Heans with the corner of her shawl in his hand), and were pulled in over her stern. It was not, however, till they were clear of danger, well out from the splash of the cascade, on the placid bodyings of the bay, that Heans began to speak with relief.

Of this behaviour in the guide, we can only say there was no reason for it. She was to have been landed that evening or the next on the mainland north of Tasman's and Forestier's peninsulas, at points where her journey back to Hobarton would have been accomplished without hazard. That she chose again the ugly adventure of the Neck, all aroused as would be its guardians by Heans' disappearance, as preferable to that of the voyage, we can only explain by her confidence in her wood-lore and native powers and her propinquity to the Isthmus (being within sound of the dogs). From such accounts of her journey out as Heans has been able to extract from her, she seems to

have made light of her crossing of the famous Neck, asserting she had had many a worse experience in the Western rivers—and this about a “bolt-hole” only successfully used by a handful of runaways storied with Cash and Kavanagh. She appears to have dived in darkness and swum it under the water with a single rise to the surface, where the gut is attenuated to the size of a river. This, judging by the water feats of the native women in diving beside their husbands to the rescue of drowning whites in the annals of our explorers,¹ was a matter difficult, but a racial achievement within her power.

It was a moment therefore of intense relief when the ship jibbed about and moved imperceptibly away on the south-eastern tack. Slowly the sound of the waterfall softened, and slowly the great walls dimmed over the silent pool, and slowly they shrank under the wings and pinnacles of the forests, while these with their thousand shouldering sentinels slowly—very slowly—softened in the smoke of morning. To this Bay, ere it was gone, and to a princess of the old race to whom these spires and coloured vales are native, Sir William Heans and Captain Stifft elevated on the deck of the *Emerald* a silent glass of Burgundy.

They zigzagged through a thunderstorm during that day, with some showers of rain, but no change and little increase of wind. On the third morning of these light and baffling breezes, they put Conapanny ashore either in Blackman's Bay or some inlet north of Roaring Beach, where Stifft watered ship and made shift to get up a sapling on his broken fore-mast. To shorten our story, Conapanny was back in Hobarton in February of 1843, calling for her treasured volume, in whose heroine, Virginia, with her elevation to the highest society and return from it into the wilds, she may have found a soothing sympathy of resemblance. As for the *Emerald*, better balanced, and better as to wind, they ran north-east and then north for some days, dipping slow but confident out into rougher seas, where, despite of Stifft's husbanding of his old canvas, and her leaks and weeds, she took the straits of Bass in a disconcerting and discreditable hurry, running in on a Polar gale into a certain bay on the southern coast of Australia, into which, six years before, a Sydney gentleman, exploring with some privation and lack of food the unknown interior, arrived to find a ship at anchor and a thriving farm.¹ To this pathfinder it was then explained that no less than five full-rigged ships had been at anchor there a week since, and though Captain Stifft found under the cliffs in the pocket of Portland Bay but three whalers

¹ Mitchell.

² Mitchell.

and a cattle boat from Launceston, one was skippered by a Mr. Abraham S—— of his acquaintance, bound for England by the Horn, who took from him his cargo of skins, and (with a stare of awful curiosity) a homesick member of his crew.

Remarkably soon after Stiff's arrival (almost as if she had been awaiting his cargo) the large ship put out, and at the very last moment, as she was running out of shelter, Captain Stiff splashed alongside, and clambered into the chains. He had come to wish his man good-bye. "Bless me, you were near too late, Stiff!" said Sir William, as he shook his nerveless hand. For answer—under his immense nose—Stiff's little mouth and sloping chin broke into an expressionless and somewhat vacant smile.

Before leaving, Stiff asked what was to be done with the *Emerald*.

"Ah," laughed Heans, "you joke, Stiff! She is all yours, and bless you both!"

"Well," said Stiff, true to a former reputation, "I must thank you for that, for if you don't mind I should like to cast her away."¹

* * * * *

Stiff, when Heans boarded the *Emerald* at Waterfall Bay, put into his hand certain letters and packages from various friends. One was from Matilda Shaxton, and that we think was buried with him, for that is all we have of it. Another was from Mr. Jarvis Carnt, and it we give presently. There was also a small package from Captain Shaxton, in which, when he opened it, Sir William found a couple of small pistols, and a beautiful satin neck-cloth of shepherd's plaid. So far—Paul and Matilda Shaxton. We hear of them leaving Hobarton about the time of Sir William's disappearance, but of returning and settling there. A guarded correspondence carried on by Heans with that place never extended to them; but in the slow movement of time and shipping of those days, it would reach his ears how the years found and left them.

But a word about Heans' old master Oughtryn. It seems he continued to live at the old Mansion with his ghostly celebrities, so it is to be supposed they kept, with a fair and workable consistency, to his allotment of one room apiece. As to his more lively prosperity, the old man grew even eminent as he

¹ We read in a local miscellany of this date that a schooner in a bad state of repair, the *Jas Dugald*, Captain Soffet, ran ashore on a spit off a sealers' depot called Kangaroo Island on February 28th, 1843, becoming a total wreck. "The captain, who has little cargo aboard, and is a gentleman of a saving habit, seems completely disheartened with the sea, and is making enquiries concerning the price of land, expressing his intention to join the colonists."

waxed in years, not only obtaining his free pardon, but being appointed, according to a familiar chronicle, a Commissioner of Crown Lands, a country dignitary upon whose duties the informant appears clearer than perhaps the reader is.

There was a rather sad little story about Miss Abelia. Apparently she began to recover health, and exchanged a few letters with Sir William Heans. But then, a singular gap occurring, and Oughtryn himself writing to excuse her on the plea that Dr. Wardshaw had forbade her the use of a quill because of the trouble in her eyes—and Oughtryn taking rather lamely to correspondence, always writing in the first person plural, and sending their "complimentary respects"—Sir William, feeling there was a delicacy in the matter, and that they for some reason were finding the correspondence a burden, dropped all communication for a twelvemonth, in which his anxiety refusing to be pacified, and not feeling satisfied that he had the truth of the matter, he wrote asking Oughtryn directly to assure him that all was quite well with them, receiving a very sad note in answer that "his young person" had "almost lost the use of her eyes," and was much depressed and saddened in health. Sir William, sorry and much distressed, forwarded to her a steel instrument for spacing her correspondence, the directions of which she precisely followed, and made good progress. In the end he used to tell her she wrote from the treasures of her mind a more peace-giving letter than he with his eyes on the world's gay flowers. Not content yet that he knew how they fared, he requested them to obtain for him a portrait of his friends in extremity, and was the happy recipient of a daguerreotype picture of the same three inmates of the old house whom he had known, quite regal of the woman, uncommon sly of Charles Oughtryn, and so pleasant and serene of Miss, you would never know she could little more than feel the odd flowers in her hand.

Of the Earl of Daisley, we learn from Tasmanian sources that, having continued his voyage about the world in unappeasable depression for the matter of a year, he contracted rather a mesalliance with a beautiful Virginian lady, whose health, or as it was whispered, querulous and haughty inclination, required periods of prolonged residence in southern Spain and the pleasanter portions of provincial Italy. Though unsuitable to his position and exquisite estates, that this union was not altogether a mistake may be gathered from the numerous sketches of their travels which still adorn the walls of the sea-beaten house which they most favoured, and the now famous library of illuminated Paternosters which they jointly collected. They had one child—a delicate girl—whose inclination towards agriculture and rural life was as overbearing as her parents' had been towards studious wandering, and in favour of this predilec-

tion of their beloved daughter, the Earl and Countess eventually relinquished their favourite pastime.

Of Heans' other friends, we hear of Mrs. Quaid and Six, still at their respective avocations, and among the articles of virtue in Sir William's den, we have an oil-painting of a native girl—not with a pipe in her mouth, but seated by the rivulet, and brightly dressed in red and spangles, with a book in her hand. This picture bears the curious signature of R. Destrappes.

Finally, from Mr. Carnt, the fortunate companion in escape of the prison artist, Madame Ruth, we have an old letter, running as hereunder :

Written at sea, as the *Emerald* is leaving us.

HONOURED FRIEND,

Mr. Carnt is now as free as Magruder, while some unknown accident has kept you from accompanying us. As it is impossible this can leave Stiff's hands except for yours, he may keep Mr. Carnt's scribble till some fine morning you reach the *Emerald*. I will so address myself therefore, with that hope, and look upon you as having executed his scheme, safe on those lethargic decks. Providence help you to the opportunity ! What has befallen you ? Heaven forbid you were not taken in the morning ! I shall never forgive myself if, through my suggestion, you gave up the carriage, and were grabbed on your horse. And yet how came you to be interfered with on Oughtryn's horses ? I cannot see, seeing our journey was uninterrupted, how they can have detained you, and believe some accident has held you back. We waited for you at the Orphanage five racking minutes after the half-hour, my Ruth beginning to sway. Could you have asked two poor bedizened effigies for more ?

All went well at Bridgewater, though the jarvey was uneasy at having missed our friend, whom I dismissed as jibbing at night-coach. Rev. Padstow and sister were saved seats inside, I relinquishing mine for the roof when Dr. Charles failed to join, being considerably flustered as well as anxious for my false hair under the eyes of an experienced woman on the opposite seat. All went well for a bit, fine weather, crowd on top, and nobody loquacious. A rather burdensome respect for Mr. Carnt. Mr. Wray's coachman goes whole distance alongside the guard, but does not give undue attention. I was relieved by Miss Padstow's behaviour, who, woman-like, showed little emotion. Recovering very slow from abstraction at leaving Hobarton, she smiled sadly at her brother through window. At Campbell Town there was an annoyance. Obstinate fellow gets up beside Rev. Padstow and enters into parochial conversation. Won't stop it. Catch him feeling whether Mr. Carnt high or low. Ready to be persuaded. Glad of darkness. Take a high, sporting stand and

put forward some reserved views. Had some difficulty in persuading him the Reformation was not the revolt against the Pope it was considered. But rather a misunderstanding between His Holiness and some Consistory Cardinals, one of whom being a high-nosed fellow and an English Bishop, created a church fuss with Henry VIII, which being relevant to the British character, grabbed the local stakes—in a word materially changed the appearance of the table. Obstinate wretch behaves worse than might have been expected, keeping me fencing with his questions till I drop all civility. However, the longest road ends, and the bumps too. At Launceston we got from the hotel to boat with nothing more terrible than the breaking down of poor Ruth, who gave way after she'd done with the coach.

(He gives an account of boat journey, continuing :)

I conclude Hobarton is aghast at Mr. Carnt for running off with the artist. I should no doubt be in ecstasies of joy. If I confess to you that (apart from your absence) I am in a pathetic condition bordering on sadness, why such unsuitable emotion! Is it ingratitude? Heaven knows, I should not be ungracious! Is it that I feel the common discontent of the human idiot as I look upon these spaceless waters, thinking of the stern chains I've smashed—and the heavenly freedom I have earned? I have succeeded in bringing two of us away. We have endured that ghastly night-drive, and our regard has survived the disappointments and quarrels of the boat. I know my Ruth better than I could have done in quieter conditions. And yet for some reason freedom does not seem to hold the fulfilment of Mr. Carnt's soaring imagination. I presume I shall expire an evergreen! Mr. Carnt of the Cascades is now a swell, so marvellous free of the old world he must have his grumble at the stars. Natur, sir, natur! Observe me writing in this strain to you with everything a man should wish beside him!

Captain Stiff is about to depart. Indeed, sir, I must close. The signals from the *Emerald* seem impatient.

We send regrets and bid you good-bye. After all, it would seem accident has been kinder to us than to you; but whatever happens in the future, whether we clasp hand again, whether all the luck's with us or Stiff puts his notions through (as we think he may), turn back the leaves once in a while, Sir William Heans. I know you're not the man to forget Mr. Carnt, or any other doubtful acquaintance, who, besides approving portions of your play, held you in esteem.

Your servant

(as free as Magruder)

JTC.

We read Mr. Carnt afterwards learnt the truth, but there is no record of his remark when he heard the actual events of that

tragic day and night on which he escaped. Not that when he had heard them he would ever be likely to forget them. Sir William Heans himself says that to "this moment" he has a bad habit when entering his stables of measuring the stalls with his eye, and likewise he never hears them play "The Campbells are Coming," or "Robin Adair," without thinking of Daunt lying in the upper room of Oughtryn's mansion, or of the rude interruption to Miss Abelia's piano.

Reverting again to that day he sailed from Portland Bay, he records how beautiful was the cloud and sunset effect on the evening of their departure. The sky was covered, but for a small light-blue segment, by a red pinion, spreading up from the burial-place of the sun, and feathered with myriads of even cirrus clouds, small near the shoulder, and giant as they spread towards the edge.

The old fellow at Port Arthur would have called it "the shadow of a wing."

NOTES.

Page 2.—“Sydney” in 1836.—“Early in the morning a light air carried us towards the entrance of Port Jackson. Instead of beholding a verdant country, interspersed with fine houses, a straight line of yellowish cliff brought to our minds the coast of Patagonia. A solitary lighthouse, built of white stone, alone told us that we were near a great and populous city. Having entered the harbour, it appears fine and spacious, with cliff-formed shores of horizontally stratified sandstone. The nearly level country is covered with thin scrubby trees bespeaking the curse of sterility. Proceeding further inland, the country improves: beautiful villas and nice cottages are here and there scattered along the beach. In the distance stone houses, two or three stories high, and windmills standing on the edge of a bank, pointed out to us the neighbourhood of the capital of Australia.

At last we anchored within Sydney Cove. We found the little basin occupied by many large ships, and surrounded by warehouses. In the evening I walked through the town, and returned full of admiration at the whole scene. It is a most magnificent testimony to the power of the British nation. Here, in a less promising country, scores of years have done many times more than an equal number of centuries have effected in South America. My first feeling was to congratulate myself that I was born an Englishman. Upon seeing more of the town afterwards, perhaps my admiration fell a little; but yet it is a fine town. The streets are regular, broad, clean, and kept in excellent order; the houses are of a good size, and the shops well furnished. It may be faithfully compared to the large suburbs which stretch out from London and a few other great towns in England; but not even near London or Birmingham is there an appearance of such rapid growth. The number of large houses and other buildings just finished was truly surprising; nevertheless, every one complained of the high rents and difficulty in procuring a house. Coming from South America, where in the towns every man of property is known, no one thing surprised me more than not being able to ascertain at once to whom this or that carriage belonged.”

CHARLES DARWIN, *Voyage of Beagle*, pp. 431-432.

Page 41.—The Story of MEGSON AND RELPH (as told by Captain Shaxton).

“Why, Megson and Relph came out here, fast, hot-spirited College men, who had embezzled their uncle’s money. They expected to go free, and brought out ponies, a calèche, and all sorts of finery. They had been implicated in some sort of rumpus on board, and when they landed near everything was taken from them, while they were put under strict surveillance in a Government office under a man named Barlings, who was strict, and perhaps inclined to bully them. This man’s usage, and the fact that they were not well received by some people named Rose (you know—the James Roses) who had known them in England, drove them to the gambling places, where they won a lot of money, came out more than ever in dress, and for a while seemed prosperous. You’d see’d ’em in their little pony-chaise driving from Cascades Road to the jetty with their gold-tasselled caps and pudding-cravats, and quarrelling—they were hot-tempered men—like a pair of undergraduates coming in from Newmarket. It seems they had come to some sort of compact about the ladies—a relic of some fast business at home no doubt. Barlings deposed you would hear them talking jealously if one or other was seen for a moment with a woman. Presently Megson falls in love with a girl—a lady, they say, of the melancholy beautiful kind; hides it from Relph; and a fierce quarrel and blows occurred one morning, when, the girl being ill, he told about it. Megson was put in irons for assaulting the others: he said under taunts from Barlings and Relph. When Relph recovered, he lived alone, driving past Megson sometimes where he worked in the iron-gang. He seems to have lavishly abused him when in hospital, but seeing him in yellow and black on the road-side, he repented, and made a clever and careful plan for their escape.

Half starving himself, he collected a lot of ship-biscuits, which he packed in a false bottom in the pony-trap. He got 450 packed away in various parts of the vehicle. Suddenly drawing up beside the gang one day, he leant out and abused Megson (at the same time telling him to run for the chaise on the following Friday, and he would pull up for him round the corner). He even gave him a light blow on the face, and drove off in a fury, shaking his fist. He was hauled up for this, but got off, with some excuses, being a small and gentle-looking man. Megson did not get off so easily and was punished. See how the luck hung against that man!

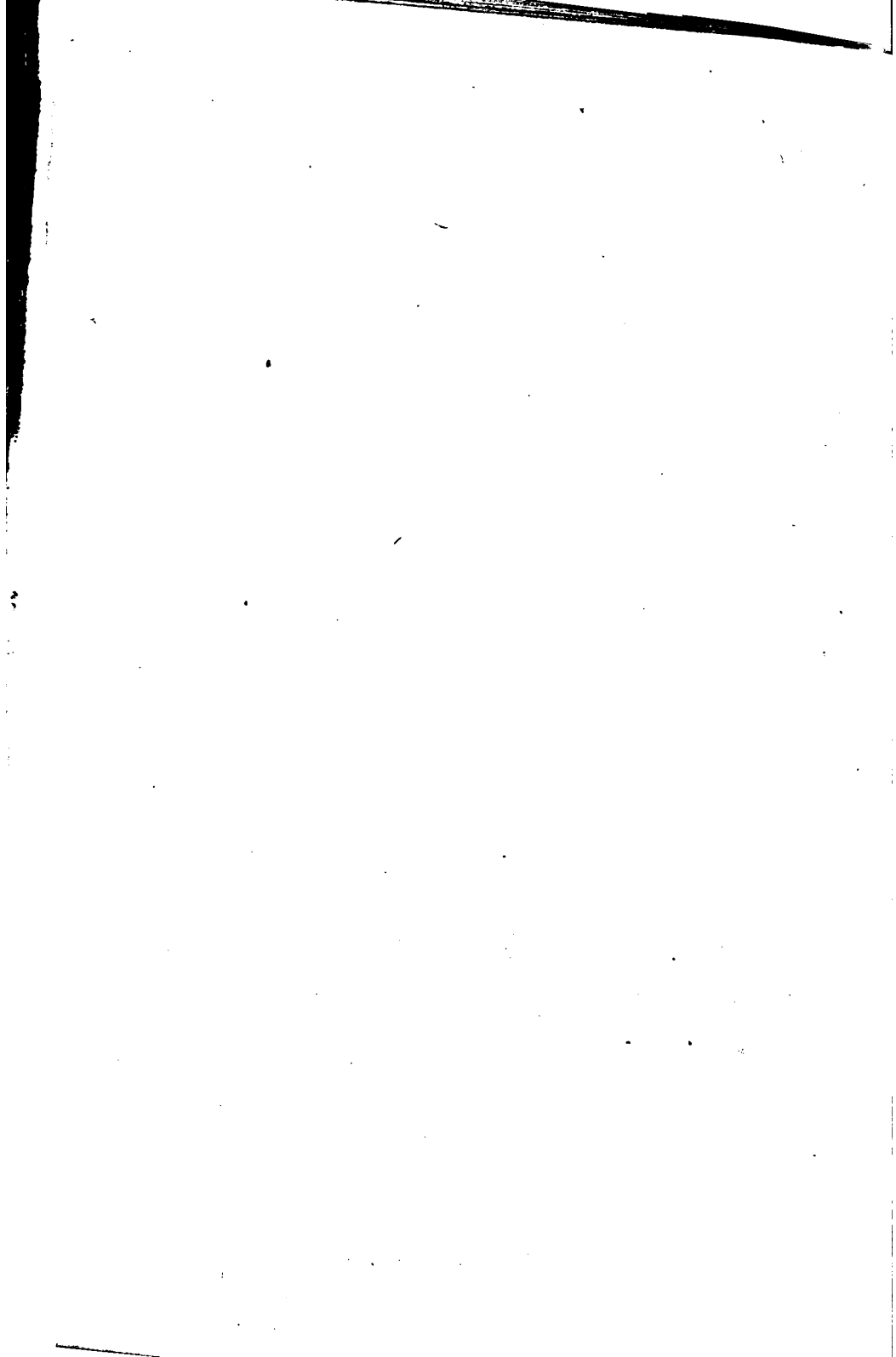
"Megson waited for Relph all Friday, and towards evening, seeing him drive by and slacken round the corner, loosened his ankle-chain and ran for it. He was shot at and hit, but he got into the caleche. Relph galloped him up the Dalrymple Road; along the river-side; and a bit into the bush. In the dusk they were missed. Abandoning the trap, they packed the stuff on the pony, and on it also got Megson with his wound. He was light, small, and delicately-made like his cousin, and they got a good way towards Launceston, when the blacks began to dog them, and they had to push for the road. Then Megson became feverish, and the police discovered them from his delirious talking. Relph was holding him on the pony and scolding at him.

"The case created a good deal of sympathy. Relph might have got off fairly easily but for his bitterness and bad-temper. He was assigned to a clergyman at Clarence Plains, and having challenged his master to a duel over something or other, and used threatening language when his request was refused, was sentenced for a month to the iron-gang, losing his civilian clothes, and putting on the stripes and chains. Relph must have felt the ground slipping from beneath his feet, for he was insubordinate, and therefore remained in the gang month after month. Several people who had taken an interest in him saw him on the roads. His light, erect little figure was easily recognisable, but he would glare at them defiantly. All seemed enemies to him now. One day Megson was drafted into the gang with four other insubordinates. He also had been assigned, been insolent, and sentenced by the magistrate to the roads. The latter worked in a stiff, unaccustomed way (he had been coachman to a doctor and very well treated) till he saw Relph, and then, as they say, he seemed, as he picked, to recognise something in the other's figure, and kept looking at him covertly. At last he stood up and called 'Relph,' and the other looked over with his brilliant smile, crying: 'No go now, Alfred!' That was all, and on they worked, the one smiling, the other shaken with grief.

"It is said that returning one day into Hobarton, Megson saw the girl that he had loved with some little children in a garden, and thinking her married, upbraided her furiously by name and was whipped for indecent behaviour. The girl is not married. They say it is that dark Miss R— living with her mother and sisters in Lavisham Terrace. There's some mystery about her. When Relph heard that Megson had been punished over a woman, he quarrelled with his overseer, assaulted him, and ran for it over a sandbank into a fringe of bush. Though fired at with a blunderbuss, he got away unwounded. All Hobarton was out after him. Megson, working in the gang two days afterwards, hearing of his cousin's escape, decided to make a run also, but they had their eye on him, for he was shot down a few yards from his tools. Relph was taken, a month later, on a small island in the Huon River, where a man was seen by the police struggling with some reptile, and beating it with a stick. They captured him there, well and hearty but terrified, with ten or eleven great snakes dead about him. He said he had killed thirty and could not sleep at night. The island is thick with them.

"Both Megson and Relph were sentenced to Macquarie Harbour, and a month later the weekly cutter took them out, shivering among a huddle of convicts, over the yellow sea. In the winter, five years ago, they escaped inland into the mountains behind the Harbour, and no doubt joined the many skeletons that strew that pathway back to civilization."





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